

1-1982

## Wavelength (January 1982)

Connie Atkinson  
*University of New Orleans*

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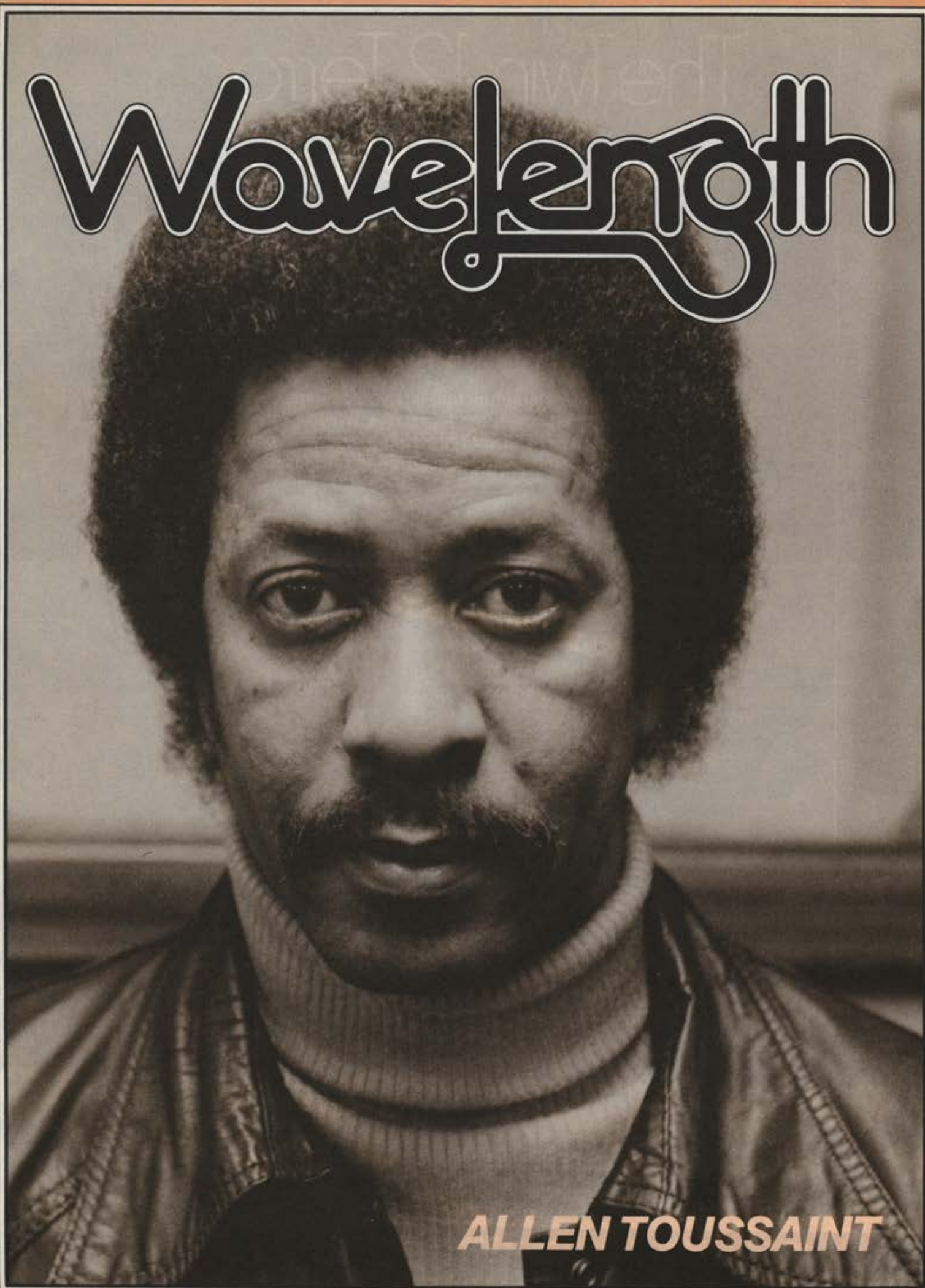
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# Wavelength



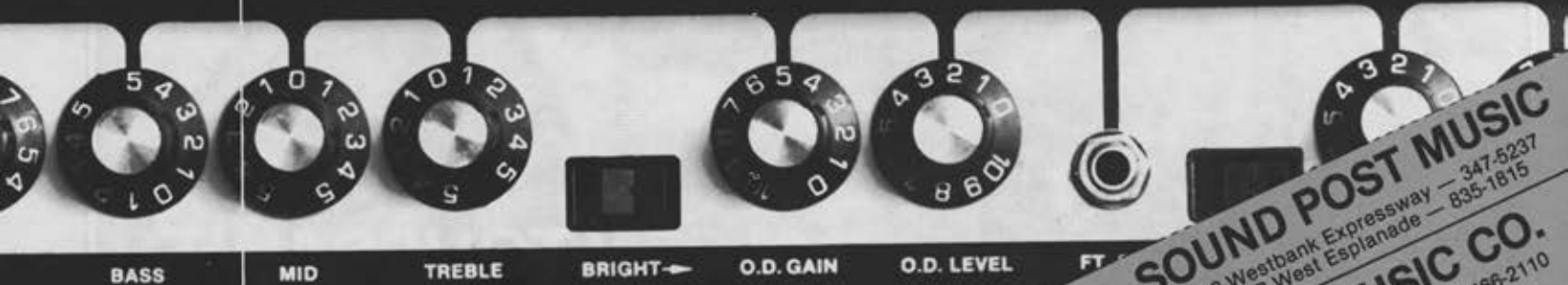
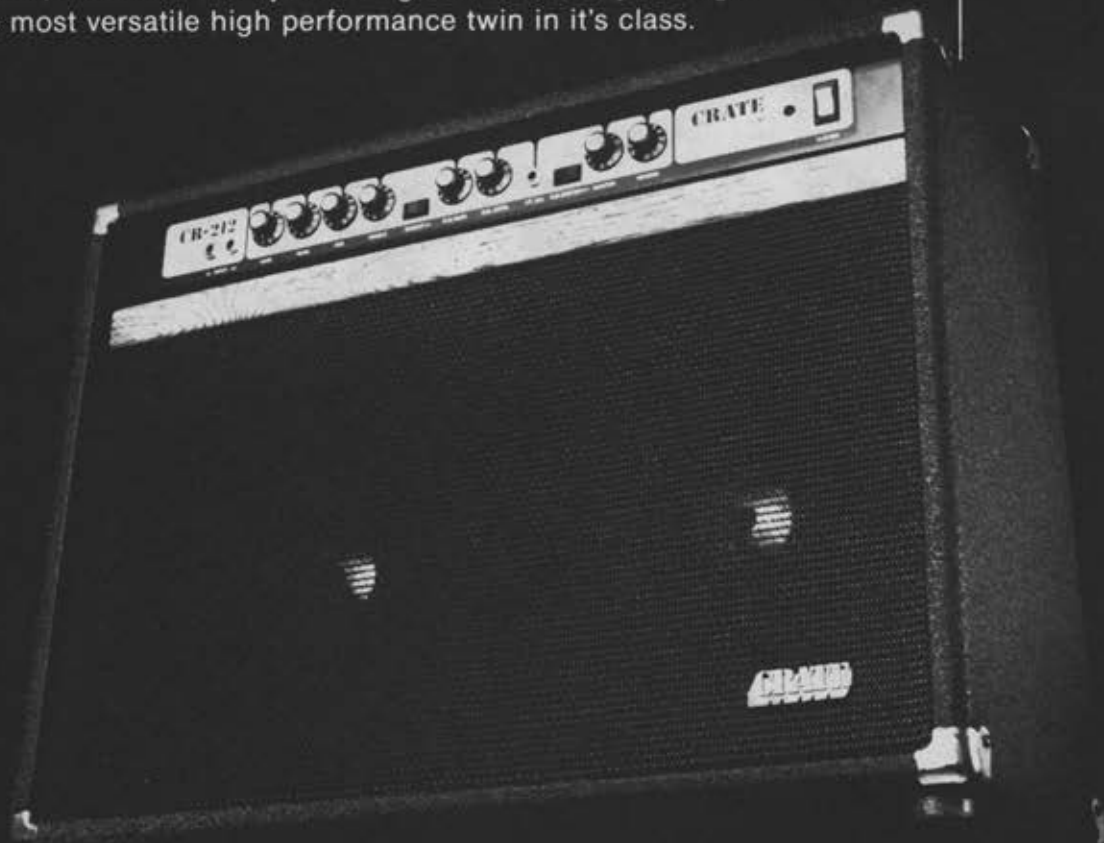
**ALLEN TOUSSAINT**

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Ernie K-Doe, 1979

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Cover photo of Allen Toussaint  
by Josephine Sacabo

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Roy Orbison, seen here with friends, will be at 3-D Jan. 22.

**1 FRIDAY**—The **Guess Who**, the Canadian rock group that had a string of hit songs in the early Seventies, will start off the new year tonight at the Palace Saloon on the lakefront in West End Park. Remember "She's Come Undone" and "American Woman"?

**2 SATURDAY**—The first Saturday night of '82, and here are four suggestions: Pop on the **President** with **The Cold**; Zydeco at Jimmy's with **Clifton Chenier**; the **Neville Brothers** visit the Palace Saloon; and a traditional jazz band at the Contemporary Arts Center's Jazz Factory led by **Kid Thomas** (of Preservation Hall fame). Something for everyone (really).

**5 TUESDAY**—Jazz singer **Angelle Trosclair**, is featured at the Faubourg on Frenchmen Street tonight and every Tuesday night in January.

**6 WEDNESDAY**—After a brief defection, **Luther Kent and Trickbag** return to the Old Absinthe Bar on Bourbon Street to hold forth every Wednesday through Saturday night, just like old times.

**7 THURSDAY**—A good time band if there ever was one, **Bourre**, whose Cajun sounds get the feet moving, play at the Maple Leaf Bar tonight and every Thursday night in January.

**8 FRIDAY**—Go back to the islands tonight with **Irving McLean and Radar**. McLean's melodic steel drums can be heard at Tupelo's Tavern on Oak Street, former site of Jed's.

**9 SATURDAY**—The bar at 8301 Oak Street, formerly called Jed's, is now under new ownership (in case you don't already know), and calls itself Tupelo's Tavern. Tonight Tupelo's presents two of the area's finest rockabilly-flavored rock 'n' roll bands. From Hattiesburg comes one of the South's most danceable and enjoyable bands, **The Drapes**, featuring the beautiful and talented vocalist Suzy Elkins and wiggled out guitarist John McMurphy. Sharing the bill will be New Orleans' own **Rockabyes**, the wildest rockabilly on three wheels.

**11 MONDAY**—There's some tough down-home blues on this blue Monday at Tipitina's with two of the finest blues-belters you'll find anywhere, **Spencer**

**Bohren and John Mooney**.

**13 WEDNESDAY**—Singer-songwriter Carolyn Odell fronts the thinking man's pop band, **The Uptights**, tonight at Tupelo's Tavern.

**14 THURSDAY**—Tonight Tipitina's celebrates its fifth birthday with music by the **Meters**.

**16 SATURDAY**—The **Fabulous Thunderbirds**, now internationally known blues busters, shake the foundations at Jimmy's. Bring your dancing shoes; this stuff is infectious. Also tonight, **Stevie Ray Vaughan** and **Double Trouble**.

**18 MONDAY**—Linda Aubert sings at Tyler's tonight and every Monday night in January. Have some oysters and a cold brew in this comfortable jazz club and listen to Linda.

**20 WEDNESDAY**—Tonight Tipitina's presents **A Taste of New Orleans**, with the movie "Up From the Cradle of Jazz," the locally produced documentary on the Lastie family, preceding the live show.

**22 FRIDAY**—Tonight a rock 'n' roll legend, **Roy Orbison**, opens a two-nighter at 3-D in Kenner. A rare opportunity indeed. Happy Birthday, Ole Man River's!

**23 SATURDAY**—R&B road band, **The Cobras**, from Austin, Texas, finish up a weekend engagement at Tupelo's Tavern.

**26 TUESDAY**—Tonight and every Tuesday night in January **James Booker** tickles the ivories at the Maple Leaf Bar, a good place to drink any night.

**27 WEDNESDAY**—Tonight **The Dirty Dozen**, a fine eight-piece traditional marching jazz band, visits Tipitina's. Across the Huey P., the Sheiks will be at Old Man River's.

**29 FRIDAY**—Saxophonist **Arnette Cobb** opens a weekend stint at the Faubourg, a comfortable, intimate room to hear live jazz. For more jazz, **Roy Ayers** will be on the **President** tonight!

**30 SATURDAY**—Today is the second anniversary of the death of a local legend, Professor Longhair. Visit his old stomping ground tonight and hear the N.O. music of the Eighties in the person of the **Radiators**.

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Audio-technica cartridges include a new patented technology. Instead of one large, and somewhat heavy magnet, Audio-technica incorporates two tiny magnets which the stylus and cantilever have to push against. This results in lower moving mass (less inertia) and thus the stylus can move easier and more quickly following the groove walls.

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We at Alterman Audio have compared Audio-technica cartridges to other cartridges, sometimes several times the cost of the Audio-technica model, and found the Audio-technica to have a more natural sound, with less harshness, yet excellent detail in the highs, and solid, rich bass.

In many of our component systems we recommend the AUDIO-TECHNICA AT 110E. This is about the middle of the Audio-technica line of cartridges, and we think it merits itself in systems costing even \$1000. The nationally advertised value of the AT 110E is \$65, but at Alterman Audio, everyday, you can buy it for \$33.00. And considering the quality of many cartridges a lot of stereo dealers put in stereo systems costing lots of money, we think you might find a very definite sonic improvement, by changing to this cartridge. And just think, it sells for less than you probably will pay for a replacement stylus for the cartridge you already own (which should be replaced every year anyway).

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## Pope Gets Religion

For those of you who have yet to get the news over the airwaves, WNNR (99 AM) has gone to fulltime gospel music programming. Station manager Ed Muniz explained the move by saying, "AM radio is having its problems, and there is a need for AM programming to be unique."

Popular disc jockey Shelley Pope, the Black Pope of "wear it out" and later "bear down on it" fame, is now spinning gospel discs. Muniz says that Pope was one of the first people at the station to push for the move to gospel programming.

WNNR's sister station, WAIL-FM (105 FM), has recently been making a splash in the ratings. For the past three months, AIL has been trading the lead with B-97 atop the Birch Report ratings — an up-and-coming challenger to perennial top ratings service ARB that Muniz says has an "uncanny" way of predicting what will be atop ARB next. Though overall ratings are increasingly meaningless — it's demographics, whether or not you reach your projected market, that rules the "diversified" world of FM — it is still one of the finest showings in recent times by an "urban contemporary" station — i.e., a station that may have an ever-so-slight trace of blues or jazz influence in its material.

## Underground Forced Underground

Things are looking bad for local new wave musicians and fans. The number of clubs willing to present new wave on a regular basis is shrinking, and there seem to be very few alternatives appearing to pick up the slack. The new music scene in New Orleans has always been marginal at best, since so much energy goes into the traditional musical forms, but unless business picks up, the underground may go under altogether.

For better or for worse, new wave has usually been seen here as an uptown phenomenon, centered around two clubs, Jimmy's and Jed's. Now punk music will no longer be heard at Jimmy's, by mutual consent of the management and the bands. The bone of contention is "slam dancing," a very rough and tumble kind of dancing imported from the West Coast.

When Jed's closed on October 31, it signaled the end of an era. More than any other club, Jed's was the home of New Orleans new wave. Now the club has been acquired by the owner of Cooter



## Golden Moments In New Orleans Rock 'N' Roll V

September 1953 Guitar Slim is confronted in a dream by a devil and an angel. Both of them offer Slim lyrics to different songs — he can only choose one. Slim takes the song from the devil. The title of the song is "Things I Used To Do."

— Almost Slim

Brown's, and the new wave policy has been eliminated. Renamed Tupelo's Tavern, it reopened Thanksgiving weekend with a more ordinary, and much safer, booking policy — the Meters, Li'l Queenie, the Radiators, the Copas Brothers, etc. — and nights set aside each week for folk music, bluegrass, and comedy. New wave has never been very big in Jefferson Parish, despite the efforts of the Showboat, and the future scheduling at Ole Man River's is uncertain at the moment.

The more pop kinds of bands, such as RZA and the Uptights, are not that bad off. They've been playing at Clarity's, formerly and exclusively jazz-oriented club on North Rampart, and even occasionally at Tipitina's. It's the more extreme bands, punks on one side and experimentalists on the other, that have the most to lose from the disappearance of regular outlets for adventurous music. Bands like the Ballistics, the Driveways, or Inhibiting Factor may never have mainstream audiences, but there have always been people interested in hearing them, and this more explorative audience is being left out in the cold.

Time Zone has been performing for a few weekends at the Contemporary Arts Center, but this venue may only be available to rock musicians for special projects. The Beat Exchange, which opened recently in Marigny, seems to be the only new club with interesting possibilities. It already has a reputation as an arty, late-night hangout, but it has a good sound system, good DJ's, and both national and local acts have been booked there of late. The club is apparently still feeling things out, but it remains to be seen whether it can save the scene and save itself at the same time. Not to mention shifting the focus of things to the other side of Canal Street.

The situation is so dire that some musicians have considered using studio space to give concerts. The Red Rockers are also thinking about renting halls on their own, thus skipping the middleman and getting around the age limit by not serving liquor. This is risky, of course, but in the future such independent or cooperative ventures may prove to be a valid alternative to the clubs.

— Steve Alleman

## A WYLD Night of Talent

"WYLD presents a showcase of New Orleans' Finest Talent!" That's the way it was billed and that's the way it was December 11 at the Municipal Auditorium. Thirty-two acts had been chosen as finalists from the four hundred who tried out in September, and the crowd was there to cheer its favorites.

The winner and obviously the crowd's favorite was Watt Bloodworth, whose vocal power cast its spell with "A House is Not a Home," and won him \$940 and the hope of a recording contract. Bloodworth's vocal range and quality is exceptional. With the ease of a seasoned performer, he had the audience screaming with delight.

Alesia Randolph, second prize winner, promised to be Broadway material with the Wiz song "Home." Other finalists were Infinity, the coed duet who sang "Am I Dreaming," Anthony Bailey, the 14-year-old, white-tuxedoed ladies' man, singing "Just Be My Lady," and Blue Diamond, the male group who did "Let's Groove."

Enhancing all this talent was the musical family group, the Battiste Brothers, who accompanied most of the acts. Their obvious talent and musical versatility should have won them a special prize. Judges for the event included community leaders as well as several recording company producers.

Several acts that did not win prizes deserve mention. The only group to sing a *cappella*, New Born, transformed the audience into gospel rockers with its hand clapping "I Believe." Midnight Delight was lead by the powerful voice of Desiree Nailer and backed by three other lovelies. They rocked out on a well-rehearsed version of "Where's California." In Zita Hawkins' comedic presentation of "Pearlie," she portrayed a black preacher seducing a silly "Butterfly" McQueen character. The crowd loved her!

It's been a long time since people like Art and Aaron Neville, Irma Thomas, Frankie Ford, Earl King, Roy Brown, Dr. John, etc. got on stage at the movie theatres at kid's matinees to show what they could do and maybe win a little money and fame. According to Alfred "Uganda" Roberts, conga player in attendance, "They used to have these talent shows all the time, but they just died out. Now it looks like they're happening again." And hopefully so. WYLD promised to put on the show again next year, and judging from the crowd, they'll have to do it in the Superdome!

— Jonathan Foose

# ALLEN TOUSSAINT

## A Life Dedicated to Music

By Kalamu ya Salaam

**A**llen Toussaint, born January 14, 1938, and reared in "Girt Town" (back off Carrollton, between Xavier University and Earhart Avenue), is the most influential New Orleans born and bred musician on the contemporary scene. However, Toussaint's reclusive lifestyle and personal reserve shroud him in mystery and quasi-obscure.

The son of a trumpet-playing father, Toussaint is primarily a self-taught musician. His sister, who plays classical piano, taught him the rudiments of reading and he has, since those early, pre-teen tutorials, gone on to become one of America's most active musicians as a songwriter, arranger, and producer.

Who is this music man few know as a person but nearly everyone listens to — even when we are not aware that the music we are hearing is the work of Allen Toussaint?

Theories, half-truths, outright lies, snatches of "I saw him at...", "I once heard him...", "He's difficult to work with 'cause...", "He's really stuck up...", and similar conjectures only further obfuscate the reality of the life of a man who made up his mind early in the game to be about making music regardless of the sacrifice necessary to achieve that goal. And, perhaps, in this age when compromise is demanded of nearly all of us, and the decision to fly on the wings of a dream is usually grounded by all the hard necessities of life down here on the ground; perhaps, this is the most distinguishing characteristic of Allen Toussaint: he has never desired to be nor tried to be anything else other than what he is, a master producer of music.

Think of artists such as Ernie K-Doe, Joe Jones, Jessie Hill, Aaron Neville, Lee

Dorsey, Bennie Spellman, Chris Kenner, et alia; think of songs like "Mother-In-Law," "Lipstick Traces," "I Like It Like That," "Get Out Of My Life Woman" — the catalogue is now over five hundred songs — think of that. Toussaint is the center of historic New Orleans R&B. Check out any artist or any hit from that heyday and odds are two-to-one that Allen Toussaint, if it is one of the hit records, either wrote the song, arranged the session, or cut the piano tracks.

When Patti LaBelle of the former R&B group Patti LaBelle and The Bluebells decided to form a new group and make a professional comeback, she brought that group to New Orleans to see a man who might be able to help them. The man was Allen Toussaint. The rotund Al Hirt climbed onto the national charts with a catchy song that had an odd, but pleasing sound. The song was "Java" and the songwriter was Allen Toussaint. Glen Campbell went country and passed through the deep south to pick up on Toussaint's "Southern Nights," a song which re-established Glen Campbell and won numerous national awards. Paul McCartney, The Band, Boz Scaggs, Gladys Knight & The Pips, Paul Simon, The Pointer Sisters, Ringo Starr, Joe Cocker, Eric Gale, Albert King, Etta James — the list is long, and seemingly endless, of national artists who have visited Dr. Toussaint for special treatment which, in some cases, amounts to a musical transfusion that pumps new blood into an anemic career badly in need of rejuvenation. And, still there is more.

When performers, particularly singers, make the trek to New Orleans, they come not just to see the doctor, they come to a whole health clinic: Sea-Saint Recording Studio, which opened in August 1973. At Sea-Saint,

Toussaint provides modern state-of-the-art recording facilities, soulful singers, accomplished musicians, songs composed and arranged to suit the artist being produced, professional session work, and the intangible, but essential, right mix of all these ingredients into a therapeutic experience which is often inspirational. Although Sea-Saint is not the only New Orleans studio, it is, by far, the leading studio in the production of hits and achievement of national recognition.

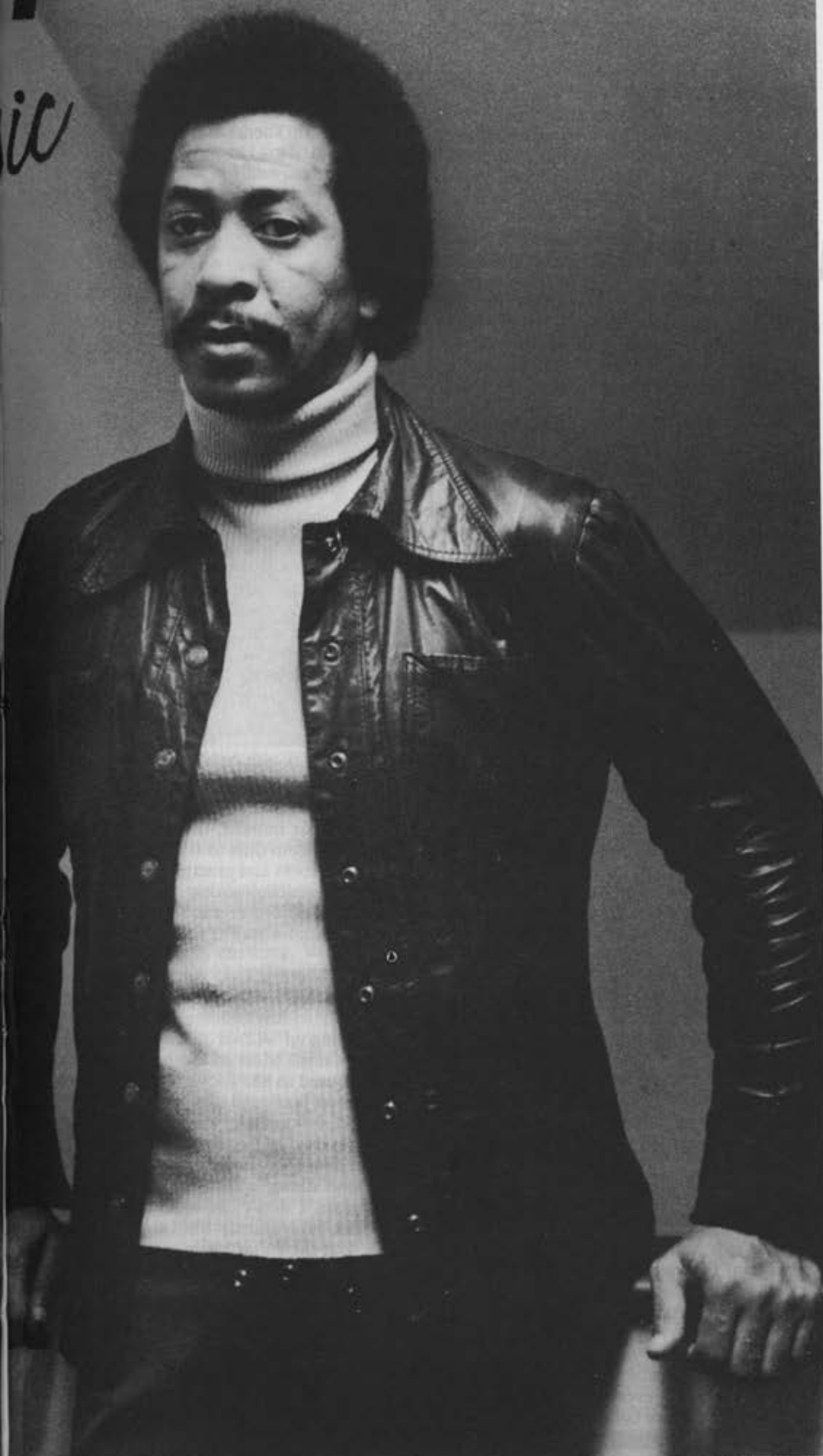
Adding up all of the above, the importance of Allen Toussaint becomes more clear. On the contemporary national music scene, which other New Orleans musician contributes as much as Allen Toussaint? In the history of New Orleans R&B, which other musician has written as many song hits, produced as many artists, and arranged as many seminal sessions as Allen Toussaint? Not to mention, who else has put together a major recording studio?

There is only one: Allen Toussaint.

With the patience that only a disciplined man can bring to what is, for many artists, an essentially non-pleasurable task, Allen Toussaint sat straight-backed but relaxed on a piano seat in his piano-dominated, second floor office and talked for over an hour and a half in an essentially philosophical vein about his life as an artist. For those who think that finding out his favorite color or hearing about with whom he sleeps somehow offers an important key to his personality, the door to Allen Toussaint will remain locked. But for those who are interested in the reflections of a man pausing to communicate the choices he has made and continues to make in shaping his life, we say read on to learn more about the music man of New Orleans, Allen Toussaint.



T  
ic



## interview:

*When did you really feel that you had a gift for dealing with music?*

It was early in my childhood. I wouldn't really know what year, but by the time I reached the age of consciousness, naturally, I had begun to play.

*What were you playing?*

Piano.

*Did you start off with any formal lessons?*

No, I just went to it in the beginning and then I decided to try music lessons since my sister was taking music lessons. We tried that for a month or two, but I wasn't getting the most out of it, so that discontinued.

*What did you do in high school?*

At Booker T. Washington I played the trumpet, and when I was getting close to being in the marching band I changed instruments.

*Why?*

Because I never wanted to march, for one thing, and I didn't like football at all.

*So what instrument did you change to after trumpet?*

Well, I played trombone a little while, I studied the drums...

*But you were still playing the piano.*

All the time. I was married to the piano and I just ran around with the other instruments.

*What did you want to do musically when you were in high school besides learn an instrument?*

Well, I knew I wanted to write and I just had a lot of fun playing.

*When you said you wanted to write, how did you know?*

I was writing before I got to high school, so by the time I was in high school I was fairly much on the way to what I'm doing now. I knew that I wanted to be in music forever and I knew if I was to have any sort of livelihood, it would be through music. That had been decided. And the writing came in my early childhood. I would come up with melodies and put them down.

*What pleasure did you get out of writing as opposed to playing?*

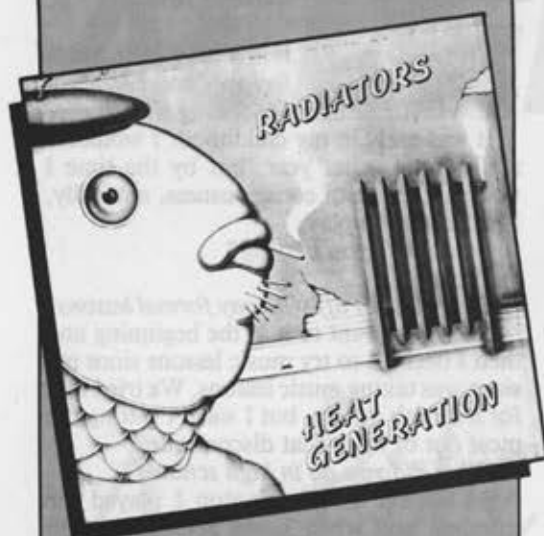
Things that weren't there before you started and then began to exist for the first time, like a new melody. Out of all the melodies that you've heard, something that you haven't audibly heard and for you to be instrumental in coming up with that — and I say instrumental because some ideas seem to just pass through us rather than us create them — to be a part of something coming to form and now it's a part of the world forever, that's just a great feeling.

*So, did you feel more strongly about your writing than your playing?*

Not in the beginning. Early on I just wanted to play. It was a lot of fun playing and it was a lot to learn. Everything I heard I thought I should learn it, every song, every type. That was so consuming at the time till I don't know where writing slipped in, but I know it got in there early.



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## the Radiators

JANUARY 1982

Saturday 2nd  
Dream Palace

Friday 8th  
Maple Leaf Bar

Saturday 9th  
Tipitina's

Tuesday 12th  
On Broadway (Chicago)

Wednesday 13th  
Fitzgerald's (Chicago)

Thursday 14th  
Tut's (Chicago)

Saturday 16th  
On Broadway (Chicago)

Tuesday 19th  
Tipitina's

Friday 22nd  
Dream Palace

Saturday 23rd  
Jimmy's

Wednesday 27th  
Tupelo's Tavern

Friday 29th  
Maple Leaf Bar

Saturday, 30th  
Tipitina's

the new orleans  
Radiators



WORK DONE  
ON PREMISES

I think as a child I considered playing to be number one. After doing both for a long time, looking in retrospect, writing has become more important than playing; writing and arranging (which falls under writing) has taken priority.

*So what did you do when you got out of high school?*

I dropped out of high school to play with Earl King.

*What year were you in school?*

I dropped out at tenth and a half.

*Have you ever regretted that?*

In a way. I also think it's a good idea to get going in what you do as early as possible. I don't regret that I did but my general...

*...you wouldn't advise someone to drop out of high school?*

No way. I think you can have both.

*At any time did you ever want to become a performer?*

Never, not a limelight performer, not up front, but a side man. I always felt like part of a band or even leading the band as far as taking care of the music and that there should be some other artist up front somewhere.

*Do you think there's any reason that you decided that you didn't want to perform, or was it just an inclination that you had to stay away from it?*

I started out learning the piano parts of records and also the songs. I didn't come up singing as much (not that you have to sing to be a performer, you could be a pianist). But I learned a lot of the tunes and whenever there was a singer around, I would play and they would sing so I sort of felt that was the way — to write a song for them to sing and play along with them and hear how it sounds. That started sort of early and that's where most of my practice was and I was so satisfied with that till I never looked to the front and center for me. I've done it a few times and it really doesn't feel like me.

*What does it feel like?*

It feels over-exposed to me. It feels like I'm getting up and dancing and I could hardly do that.

*Why? Why can't a person who writes such beautiful songs and different melodies and different rhythms and obviously feels it all, why couldn't you perform it?*

Well, I could perform, but it doesn't feel like a performance to me... I don't feel the joy in accomplishment that I expect a performer to feel about what they're doing and to deliver your heart into it while you're there. That's what I expect out of a performer. Since I haven't practiced that, when I'm there it doesn't feel that way, so as far as I'm concerned it must not be coming off that way.

*So how do you respond when people clap and say "I really enjoyed your performance?"*

I just say thank you, the quickest thank you I can. I have no opinions for that. As soon as I hear that, it's back to what I do: producing, recording, writing, arranging for different artists.

*So why do you perform once a year?*

It's the New Orleans Jazz Festival. It's the foremost musical event in the city tied directly to us and, of course, some outsiders

are invited for different reasons, but it's our jazz festival. There was the Newport Jazz Festival... now there's our jazz festival here and I've been invited to perform each year and since I am in music and, I hope, so much a part of the music here, I feel that it's not only a great honor but that I'm just supposed to be there.

*Some people have said that Toussaint is a great songwriter, he's a good producer, but he's not really an artist.*

Great. An artist is that front stage center to me. I'm not that. I'm the one who produces that. There's a Labelle and there's a Toussaint.

*How seriously do you work at developing*



*your piano technique?*

Not as much as I need to, not much at all anymore. Like many musicians, I probably develop for six months, then the rest of the while... but from time to time I have gotten back to the roots and practiced seriously for a while, practicing scales, and I promise myself to do it forever and then the next six months, no more scales. That's just the way that goes.

*What piano music do you like?*

First of all I like Professor Longhair forever. I liked Ray Charles a lot in the early days coming up. Alfred Ammons, a boogie woogie pianist. Most of the boogie woogie pianos. I used to like Lloyd Glenn a lot and all the good jazz guys later on. Even Eddie Heywood, I thought he was really good. Nat King Cole used to be a very good pianist.

*What about the guitar?*

It came along with the other musical instruments. I don't like it any more than any other instrument, like the violin or others. But the guitar being something that you can pick up and hold close to you with both hands, and sort of hug it and put it next to your chest, you can take it to hotel rooms and you can't carry a piano, and when you strum it, you can feel it. That's largely responsible for my caring for the guitar.

*Acoustic guitar, not electric?*

Oh yes, I have no ambition to play an

electric guitar.

*No ambition — is there something repulsive about it?*

For me it would be repulsive to play the electric guitar. I like what I hear when I hear it being played by B.B. King or Walter Washington, but for me it would have to be acoustic and mainly gut strings.

*In the heyday of the Fifties, in a sense, you were the unseen architect. During the Fifties, were you conscious of yourself evolving into a full-fledged music producer?*

Yes. I could see that coming. As soon as I got anywhere close to what I'm doing now, I felt it was good. Soon as I got to the studio as a sideman and began calling out horn parts, I



knew I would be doing this. It felt like I was on the way there, going somewhere, and I was supposed to go there very naturally.

*Of those days, in which of the sessions do you feel you accomplished what you set out to accomplish?*

Oh, I don't see it as what I set out to accomplish because it's not like that. That's just some music I was making one day so I didn't accomplish anything, actually. The accomplishment was in the choice early — either made for me or partially by me, by God probably — that I would be doing what I'm doing now, the way that I do it and how much I do it. So, I haven't felt the feeling of having arrived anywhere.

*It's like a bird flying, that's not an accomplishment?*

Right.

*How did you decide that you wanted to do your own studio?*

Necessity. Cosmo was the studio in most of my earlier playing. There was something happening, that Cosmo was about to go out of the studio business, and that meant that we wouldn't have a place that I knew about to record, so we had best get started on a studio. That just came out of sheer necessity. I never thought that was something I wanted or needed.

*Why do you think that you have been one of the few black musicians in the city who*

*has been able to get a studio?*

Well, I don't know how many want to put a studio together. A studio is a physical building with equipment, machinery, very expensive machinery, but it's just a building with machinery in it to record what musicians do. It's a whole different business. Musicians play music. A studio records what they play. It's two separate entities.

*But isn't there something more to it? Why is it that people will come who don't live in the place where the studio is, they will hire musicians who live someplace else, they'll fly the musicians in, they'll fly an arranger or songwriter in, they'll go in and want to record at that particular studio?*

There are lots of things that go on with that. Our studio is very much up to date as far as modern technology. That helps. That is a vital factor. We have turned out quite a few gold records in our time that are associated with us. Also, we've gotten so many things out on the market till people know we exist — that's a factor of folks coming here to do things and, if a person is going to use my services, this is the best place to use it.

*When did you move from Allen Toussaint, the New Orleans musician, to songwriter, arranger, someone whom Warner Brothers, Atlantic, and other companies, as well as various other artists, whether it be a Patti LaBelle, a Glen Campbell, an Eric Gale, or a Bob Seger would say, "Let's call this cat up down in New Orleans?"*

By the time that happened I had been through some successes of my own here with other artists. In '59 we had Jesse Hill, then Ernie K-Doe with "Mother-in-Law," Irma Thomas and Aaron [Neville]. So I was quite busy before we did any national or international artists. By the time that began happening, it was just another day in the life.

*In other words, you already felt like you were doing what you wanted to do and this was just another detail?*

...And they came to get some of what we do and that's that.

*When you say we, whom do you consider we?*

Us in New Orleans. I'm just a product of the guys here. It's us.

*What do you do besides music?*

I shoot pool, I know a few parlor games. But I don't actually do anything worth mentioning.

*When you say you don't do anything else worth mentioning, do you consider that there is any other way that you can express yourself or make a contribution in life, other than through music?*

Not at all. There is nothing else. If god wanted to use me to make a spiritual contribution, I couldn't say something about that because it wouldn't be of my own doing. But any responsibility that I would take on would be music.

*So, you've dedicated your life to music? Yes.*

*Have you ever been frustrated by your dedication? Has there been anything frustrating in the music?*

In the music, but not in the dedication. I've had moments when I wasn't pleased

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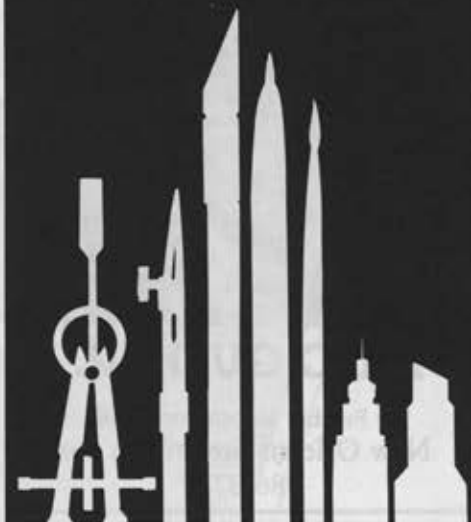
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with the outcome of certain phrases, or things like that, or the communication between who you're trying to get the music done through, but I accept that as par for the course.

*Do you suffer from writer's block?*

I don't know what writer's block is, but I think I do. There have been times that I have awakened in the morning and didn't feel like a musician, didn't feel like a writer or that I would write another song. It just didn't feel like I had what it took to write a song, seemed like I was another person. Yes, I've had those feelings.

*So what do you do when you feel this alienation from yourself, since your whole life has been dedicated to music?*

Well, first of all I get rid of the fright. It's happened twice in my life. The first time it was really frightening because it was really foreign. I always considered myself as responsible and aware of my surroundings and fairly secure in knowing what I can do. To wake up and not feel like that's what I do anymore, it was like "this is now a foreign person here." The first time that it happened it was a little frightening. And it lasted for more than a day, a couple of weeks.

*People who were close to you, did they perceive?*

No.

*So that must have made it doubly frightening?*

No, because what I do has always been fairly private anyway. By the time I get to other people, I've written the songs that we're going to record and I've planned everything. So, what I do has always been a solo flight to me and then, when I get to the physical labor of it to get it done, it is already finished and perfect. Then we begin to take it apart and put it together again. Every detail has already been worked out in my head or on paper. I always felt that solo flight of doing things anyway, so if I would have ever had a problem, musically, like that, it wasn't anyone else's concern and it didn't make it worse because others didn't know it. I never thought much of crying on shoulders.

*You ever think about leaving the city?*

For one or two days.

*What about, say, when you were in high school?*

No. You mean move somewhere else to live? No. It's not that I have a reason for not wanting to leave, but rather that I would need a reason to leave.

*What about some of the other musicians who were your friends who would go to New York or some other city and write or call back and say, "hey, Allen, I know we can make it. Why don't you come on up here?"*

I think it's great for guys to leave because it widens the scope. Some folk need to, some folk want to, some folk have to. Whatever the reason, it should be done. It expands your music, it expands your head.

*So why didn't Allen Toussaint, a person who has never wanted to leave New Orleans, except for a couple of days to do a specific thing, how is it that you are the most New Orleans of the New Orleans musicians, and yet your music is probably*

*broader than most of the others?*

That's a good question. I don't really know. For one thing, at one period, I tried to collect everything that came my way, even from remote areas, different kinds and types of music.

*When you say collected, what do you mean?*

I've never wanted to be, say, just a blues player, and when I come up you expect to hear the blues until I'm through. No, if I was going to play for an hour you'd probably hear the blues, a waltz, a polka, disco, the whole bit. And not to show off, it's just that for me to spend that much time at the piano, I have to do those things or I would get swiftly bored.

So, having collected so many things, I have made changes a lot. When things fail and don't do as much as you expect them to do on the commercial market, I have made changes in them and I pay attention to the world and what they're saying these days in other areas since it's so easy to do nowadays. And then maybe it's constantly doing homework for different things rather than just developing one thing which I started out with.

*So you liked the boogie pianist, and if you heard something on the radio, you would go and try to find the record or sheet music or what?*

Well, I didn't like the boogie piano any more than others. It's just that the earlier ones I heard were boogie and classical. But I tried to play everything I came across, especially hillbilly music.

*Why do you say especially?*

Because, when I was a child, it was played so much more on the radio than anything else. You could find hillbilly songs on stations all day long and then, maybe a couple of hours a day, you could hear R&B songs. But the market wasn't such where you could hear R&B songs all day long.

*So you would basically hear black musicians in the clubs and the joints, and in the neighborhood, and when you listened to the radio you heard whatever you heard there, and in school you heard whatever you heard there. Did you ever go to a music store and walk up to a rack of sheet music, pull something off and say, "Let me see if I can do this?"*

Not quite like that, not as a child. I learned everything by ear, and I learned to read, fortunately, from my sister, and the very basics from those two months of study.

*So, outside of those two months of study, have you done any formal study of music?*

No.

*Can you write down just about everything you hear?*

Not just about. Everything! If it's a clear sound. Of course, there can be a car wreck that happens and you hear a cluster of cars, you know basically what it is, and you can imitate it, but there may be something missing; but yes, I can write any song. There's just no reason not to. If I hear it, I just play it.

*You said if you heard a car wreck —*



when you hear music, do you hear music only in a formal sense, or do you hear everything as music?

Yes, I would say the latter. But there are some things that don't necessarily relate. Like this is humming a B flat (pointing to the fluorescent light).

*Well then, is there a switch in your head that says at a certain point everything is just everything and at another point I'm tuning in and I hear everything as music?*

It turns on and off. Sometimes when I hear the news, the way the announcers talk when they're telling you about the Iran crisis and so and so... While they're talking, I noticed that all of the newsmen have developed such a rhythm, that sometimes I turn off to the words, and I hear the licks they're playing and it sounds like a saxophone and they do it at a tempo that goes like this (he mimics the beat he hears). So I have to relate that to the switch you mentioned, 'cause that happens sometimes and it gets to be such a groove till I can no longer hear what they're saying 'cause I'm not interested. I'm not interested in news anyway.

*Why?*

I don't care for the news. The national news being mostly bad, for one thing, and it brings things right to your living room and contaminates the area. It's as simple as you can take it in or you don't have to, it means the same to you. Your awareness of that bad thing that happened doesn't mean much to you if you turn it off. It only means something to you if you accept it.

*So you're saying the news that you hear, basically what I call the death, doom and destruction way of presenting the news — it's not what happens that affects us, but it's our perception of what happens that affects us?*

Right.

*...and we might feel bad that there is a war in such and such a place not because people were being killed, but because it has been presented to us that this was a bad war as opposed to a good war and in both wars people were being killed.*

The war itself is bad. Does it have to be in your living room if the war is not present there? No! If you have been blessed not to be in it, why accept it?

*So in a sense you're calling for elimination of the negatives that are unnecessary in your life?*

Oh yes. Especially those that I can't do anything about. I would rather cut off my own cancers as soon as I can see them and do something about them. But much is presented to me that I can't do anything about if I accept it. Of course, they say, well, everybody can do something about everything. It is fine talk and sounds like a good commercial, but it is not true, and since I know that, there is no sense in me accepting bad news everyday.

*How did you develop yourself philosophically? Through certain books that you studied or talks with people or what?*

I don't know what you mean by development. You develop philosophy by just living.

[Cont. on page 36]

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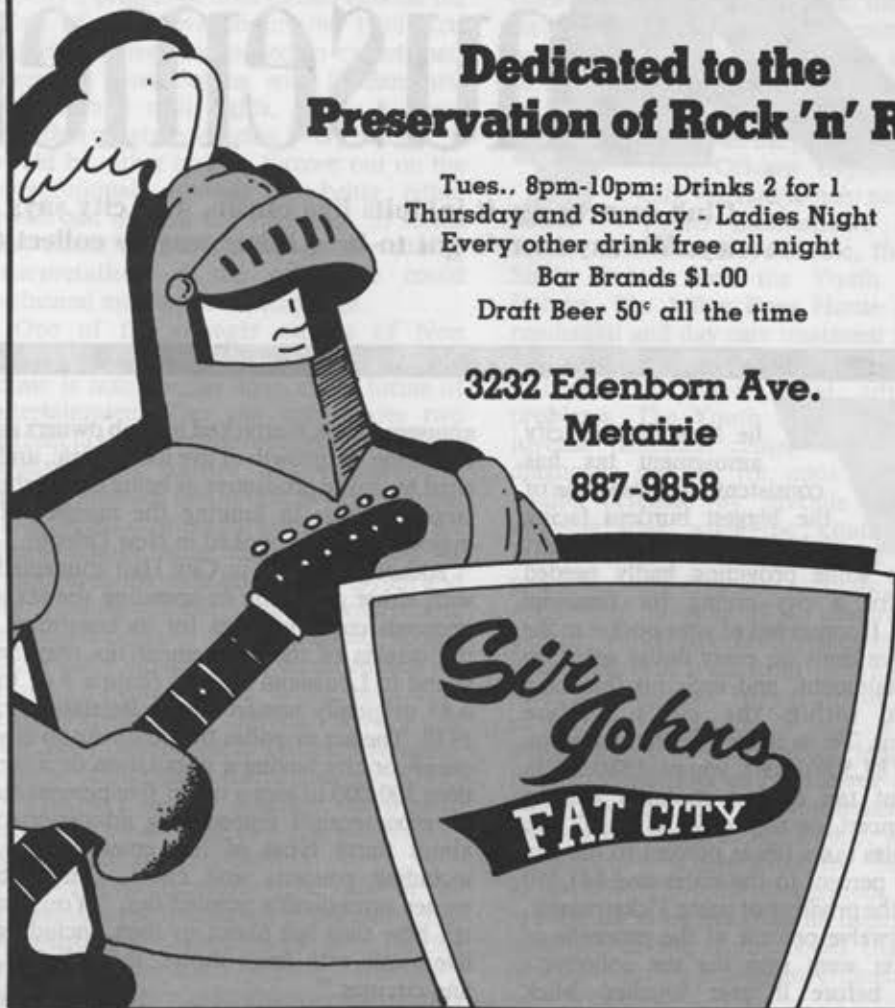
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Section 6-1. Tax imposed.

There is hereby levied a tax for the purpose of providing funds for public and quasi-public charitable institutions in the city as authorized by the 1950 Revised Statutes of Louisiana, Sections 4:41 to 4:45. The tax shall be two (2) per cent on the gross receipts representing admission charges to any theatre or motion picture house, including closed circuit boxing bouts or prizefights and five (5) per cent of the gross receipts representing admission charges to merry-go-rounds, whips, roller coasters, auto and flying scooters, carousels, scenic railways, ferris wheels, fun houses, mirror mazes, and any and all other amusement rides operated on public property. The tax shall be five (5) per cent of the gross receipts representing admission charges to the following described amusements when operated or offered on private or public property, to wit: Any athletic contest (except live boxing bouts or live prizefights), exhibition, pageant, production, demonstration, flower show, concert, musicale, recital, circus, freak show, minstrel show, lecture address, any night club, cabaret, dance, dance hall, or restaurant which provides either floor shows, singing, dancing or dancing facilities, musical groups or "compos" or any other forms of entertainment whatsoever for its patrons; excursions and sightseeing steamers which receive and discharge passengers in the city, aviation pleasure rides that take on and discharge passengers in the city, scenic railways, flying horses or merry-go-round, shooting gallery and games of skill and chance as well as mechanical devices operated for pleasure or skill when (a) a fee is charged for admission or entrance or for the purpose of playing such game or device; or (b) there is any charge whatsoever therefor or in connection therewith either directly or indirectly; or (c) admission is made by season ticket. The tax shall be one per cent of the gross receipts representing admission charges to live boxing bouts or live prizefights.

1. For general provisions in regard to theatres and other forms of entertainment, see ch. 63 of this Code.

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The amusement tax herein imposed shall be levied on the gross receipts to the 1978 Super 18. (C.C.S. Ord. No. 15-129, §§ 1, 2, 11-30-67; M.C.S. Ord. No. 3690, § 1, 11-30-67; M.C.S. Ord. No. 4084, § 1, 2, 6-5-69; M.C.S. Ord. No. 4084, § 1, 2, 6-5-69; M.C.S. Ord. No. 6152, § 1, 4-26-73; M.C.S. Ord. No. 6631, § 1, 2-6-75; M.C.S. Ord. No. 6416, § 1, 7-14-77.)

Section 6-1.1. Taxes on mechanical machines and devices.

Owners or operators of amusement parks situated either on public or private property, where there are located mechanical rides or devices; and owners or operators of pinball machines, mechanical music boxes, coin-operated games and any and all other games which are played for skill or amusement, may, in lieu of the payment of the prescribed amusement tax on said mechanical rides, devices, or pinball machines, mechanical music boxes, coin-operated games and any and all other games which are played for skill or amusement as stated in section 6-1, supra, pay an operator's license fee as follows:

(A) Mechanical ride or rides or devices, fun houses, mirror mazes and any other amusement rides (each) \$500.00 per annum/or any portion thereof one-half for six months or less.

(B) Arcades containing coin-operated machines operated as a unit under one roof and operated only on a seasonal basis of 6 months or less, per arcade for each 6 months or less operation \$250.00.

(C) Owners of any coin-operated amusement machine or machines and/or music machines, specifically, coin-operated phonograph, coin-operated bowling games, shuffle alleys, pinball games, mechanical baseball games, electronic ray guns, mechanical guns, digger-type machines, iron claws and all similar types of coin-operated amusement games or any combination thereof shall pay an annual fee as follows:

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By Shepard H. Samuels

# THE NOT SO AMUSING Amusement Tax

Club owners say it inhibits live music. The city says the orphans that it supports needs the money. We say there's got to be a fairer way to collect this tax on our city's musical heritage.

The New Orleans city amusement tax has consistently imposed one of the biggest burdens facing club owners and concert promoters while providing badly needed revenue for a city crying for financial assistance. It comes out of your pocket to the tune of five cents on every dollar spent on live entertainment, and ends up financing programs within the city's welfare department. To be more specific, based on the sale of 87,500 tickets, you paid \$80,937 in amusement tax at last month's Rolling Stones concert, on top of the \$113,392 you paid in sales taxes (three percent to the city and three percent to the state) and \$43,750 spent for the privilege of using Ticketmaster. In total, twelve percent of the proceeds of your ticket went into the tax collector's briefcase before it ever touched Mick Jagger's hand. It's no wonder that the

amusement tax is attacked by club owners as inhibiting the growth of live local music, and cited by music promoters as being one of the largest factors in limiting the number of major acts being booked in New Orleans.

Although no one in City Hall connected with either collecting or spending the tax's proceeds could account for its enactment, the origins of the amusement tax may be found in Louisiana Revised Statute 4:41 to 4:45 originally passed by the legislature in 1938. The act provides the authority to any parish or city having a population or more than 300,000 to levy a tax of five percent on the gross receipts representing admission to about thirty types of live entertainment, including concerts and clubs. One club owner sarcastically pointed out, "You can tell how they felt about us then, including live music with freak shows, flying horses, and circuses."

In 1980, \$1,871,682 was collected in

amusement taxes, with \$1,832,984 collected in 1979, according to Joan Glennon, head of New Orleans' department of revenue. How is the tax collected from clubs offering live music? Each month they are mailed a form which has spaces marked "gross receipts from admissions" and "gross receipts during entertainment" of which five percent made during the previous month must be paid by the twentieth day of the following month, or owners face an incredible twenty percent delinquency payment fee. Thus, club owners and promoters are put in the curious position of being collection agencies for the city on the money made from their patrons. John Kelley, general manager of Tipitina's, complains, "The forms themselves aren't clear. They don't say whether it's paid for free or profitable entertainment."

In case you never realized that you've been paying an amusement tax all these years, you



can thank the city for not enforcing its own requirement of notice of the tax. The city ordinance enacting the tax requires that at any place where the tax is collected and the admission price is advertised, "the total of both must be specifically set out on a placard or notice" and "posted at each box office window." In addition, the price and tax "shall be conspicuously printed" on that part of the ticket which is taken up by the management. When asked why this ordinance isn't observed, Joan Glennon said "We've got more important things to do, but we might consider enforcing it in the future."

**D**oes this system of using the club's management as revenue collecting arms of the city really work? Only with the greatest difficulty, according to both club owners and city hall officials. Since the tax, as now interpreted by law, includes gross receipts on money made during entertainment, mostly drink and food, keeping accurate records requires that the people running each cash register note the exact time a band starts and stops playing.

In a lively but amicable discussion between L.E. Madere, director of the mayor's office of economic analysis, and Jed Palmer, owner of the now defunct Jed's University Inn, Madere, over Palmer's objections, claimed it was "impossible" to keep track on each cash register every time the music went on or off. Glennon, who supervises the payment of tax, says, "Most establishments don't keep good records. You take a percentage, which is very difficult to determine, based on such factors as the hour, the band, and the capacity of the club; it's a nightmare."

To assist in this task, the city has about thirty tax auditors who go about the clubs to see if owners and promoters are making accurate reports. If not, an assessment is made, and any proprietor disputing the figure can go to the revenue office and negotiate a sum to be paid. If that's unsatisfactory to the club owners and promoters, there's a tax review committee consisting of a representative of the chief accounting officer, the city attorney, and the director of finance. When this reporter asked if this entire system of assessment might be used as a political tool with which one could harass a club owner or promoter with more frequent audits or higher assessments, the surprising reply from all concerned was that it was possible, but that no one could recall a single instance in which such action had happened. Madere made the interesting remark, "Our city auditors are too overworked for that; it's more likely that you'd get a fire inspector coming on a secret call."

The question of whether the five percent amusement tax can be legally imposed on money made from the sale of food, beverages, tee shirts, etc. during live entertainment has been repeatedly asked by club owners and promoters. The original Louisiana Revised Statute of 1938 simply defines "admission" as including "charges made for seats and tables, reserved or

otherwise, and other similar accommodations." The City of New Orleans Ordinance Section 6-3 expands on this only slightly, adding to the state's definition the following: "...as well as all amounts paid for admission, refreshments, service and merchandise at any of the establishments set forth in Section 6-1 or other similar place furnishing a public performance for profit, if any payment or part thereof for admission, refreshment, service, or merchandise entitles the patron to be present during any portion of such performance." In plain English, this means that the tax will include anything bought to gain admission, and takes care of those bars, mostly in the Quarter, that have no cover charge but do have a two-drink minimum.

In 1956, the question of the city's imposition of the tax on everything sold during live entertainment under the claim that it constitutes "admission" was brought before the Louisiana Supreme Court by the city in the case, *City of New Orleans v. Christain*. The Louisiana Supreme Court, in a totally eccentric decision, upheld the city's contention, stating, "The statute is very broad and seems to cover all services rendered in the nightclub in view of the fact that the term admission is defined so as to include other similar accommodations. When the statute as a whole is compared with the ordinance, it is apparent that the ordinance has not enlarged upon the provisions of Act 212 of 1938."

This last sentence was correct; however, the court's interpretation of the meaning of the city's ordinance does indeed enlarge the scope of the provisions of the 1938 Act. Students of law are trained to expect that, except in cases dealing with fundamental liberties and civil rights, where a court describes a statute as being "very broad," it would be rather quickly thrown out on the constitutional grounds of being either overbroad or void for vagueness. It seems very doubtful that the city and the court's interpretation of the ordinance could withstand another court challenge.

One of the stranger aspects of New Orleans' version of the amusement tax is that music is taxed higher than other forms of entertainment. The city only levies two percent tax on the gross receipts representing admission to movies and closed-circuit boxing, and one percent on live prizefights. Since the ticket prices for boxing matches are almost always higher than that charged for music, even for such acts as Bob Dylan and the Rolling Stones, club owners and promoters bridle at this distinction. No one at city hall volunteered any comments on the reasoning behind it. Ed White, who until recently co-managed Ole Man River's and now promotes concerts on the *President*, says the tax is clearly discriminatory. Kelley of Tipitina's agrees, adding "the burden falls on a clearly selective group, an easy, disorganized group to tax."

An even more controversial facet of the amusement tax is complete exemption from it granted to all Superbowl games by the city council. On this point there is not even unity of opinion at city hall, which at least shows

an atmosphere of healthy discussion. Dr. Morris Jeff of the department of welfare, who supervises the spending of the proceeds of the tax, says he "accepts the exemption. The influx of people into town increases the payment of the tax in other areas. We might not get the Superbowl with the tax. Miami lost it because of a similar situation and Detroit picked it up." Glennon says that she wasn't privy to the city council's decision, but "most cities don't have this tax, and the Superbowl still pays the seven percent sales tax." Madere says he "doubts the Superbowl would go anywhere else," and is against exemption for it. White makes the point that city council action supports his opposition to the tax: "If you don't have the tax, you get the Superbowl; if you don't have the tax, you get a lot more concerts playing in New Orleans."

Now that the controversy surrounding the tax has been explored, how are the proceeds spent? Under the state statute and city ordinance, the tax is "levied for the purpose of providing funds for public and quasi-public charitable institutions in the city." The Louisiana Supreme Court, in its 1956 decision, said that the Act of 1938 "states the proceeds thereof are dedicated to the relief of the unemployed or unemployables or mothers aid cases of State. The ordinance also states that tax is levied for the purpose of providing funds for the relief of the unemployed or unemployables or foster home care of sponsorship of WPA projects as provided for by Act 212 or 1938 as amended." (The Supreme Court hadn't done its homework; otherwise, they would have discovered that a 1948 amendment still basically in effect today gives the authority to withdraw such funds solely to the parish or municipal director of public welfare.)

**T**oday, all the proceeds go to the New Orleans Department of City Welfare to help pay for the Touro Shakespeare Nursing Home, the Milne Boys Home, the Youth Study Center, and the Youth Services Bureau. The Milne Boys Home provides residential and day care treatment for male youths eight to sixteen who are emotionally disturbed or have social adjustment problems. The Youth Study Center is a juvenile detention center which provides diagnostic services for male and female youths detained by juvenile court and awaiting trial, while the Youth Services Bureau is a "community-based juvenile prevention and diversion program."

Dr. Jeff, director of the department of welfare, which has direct responsibility for these programs, is far from one's idea of the faceless bureaucrat. His office wall includes pictures of Malcolm X and a superb photograph of a young black Mardi Gras Indian. According to his figures for next year's budget, the 1981 amusement tax is projected to bring in \$2,030,000, while the department's entire requested budget is \$3,934,659. Thus the amusement tax will provide for more than half his department's revenues. It should be noted that direct funding from the federal government will be only \$174,699.



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When asked what effect the removal of the amusement tax would have on his department, Jeff quickly replied, "We'd have to close the institutions, it's as simple as that." He added, "You have a choice of whether services are going to be provided to the lives of children and senior citizens, or whether promoters are going to make an additional five percent on their patrons." To Jeff, the tax should be a case of "everybody wanting to make a contribution to those who aren't able to fend for themselves and are in need; it's a community affair, and you'd think people would try to get as much tax as possible, since it isn't the owners but the patrons who are paying the tax."

Although some idea of how club owners and promoters feel about the amusement tax has already been shown, let's take a look at their opinions as to its effect on local live music. Ed White, with an air of anger disturbing his otherwise soft-spoken style, says, "The tax is outrageous. As a promoter and production coordinator, I say it's a ripoff to the city. I know many people, myself included, who would be more inclined to put on shows if it weren't for the tax. Promoters go to Baton Rouge and Biloxi rather than New Orleans, so the city loses money, money they would make with the sales tax. I have a degree in marketing and I've always found that it's better to do a lot more of anything because you end up making a lot more money on repeat business." He also points out that "concerts here give jobs to a lot of people besides the musicians — the extra police at \$10 an hour, plus the stagehands and electricians; and money is spent on local hotels and on radio and print advertising." Jed Palmer agrees: "Promoters have opted to go to Baton Rouge or St. Bernard rather than New Orleans. The tax diminishes the promoters' incentive, and ultimately is an inhibiting factor to the growth of live music by local musicians." John Kelley summed up their feelings: "Discos don't pay the amusement tax, just the live music; and live music is what has kept New Orleans on the map, not the Superdome."

All the club owners and promoters quoted here agreed that if the tax couldn't be abolished, it should be lowered, and that all forms of entertainment, including boxing, discos, movies, and the Superbowl, should share their burden equally. L.E. Madere also favors enlarging the scope of the tax, but sees no viable alternative to the amusement tax in the future. He'd like to see New Orleans get rid of all of what he calls "nuisance" taxes, but only after passage of a metropolitan earnings tax. But such a tax would require an amendment to the Louisiana Constitution, which prohibits such levies.

In what was almost an afterthought, Jed Palmer reflected, "The main thing holding up the growth of New Orleans music is that there's no cooperation; the state, city, and local music interests should sit down and talk." An excellent first step would be a meeting between city hall, club owners, promoters, musicians, and the public to discuss the amusement tax. Listening to the principles, such a meeting is long overdue. □

# Topcats

By Steve Alleman

Play copies and lose your originality, or play originals and lose your audience?

**F**or most local bands, the biggest problem is figuring out how to attract an audience. The Topcats don't have this problem. They draw substantial crowds to their performances, and they even have regular weekly gigs at Fletcher's Nightry and the Palace Saloon. Their problem is one of musical identity. The current Topcats were formed from the remnants of TQ and the Topcats, a popular Fifties show band, and many people still associate them with that band, although the new Topcats concentrate on Sixties and Seventies material, with a few originals thrown in for good measure. The problem is that the band members would like to play a greater percentage of original material.

The new edition of the Topcats started about nine months ago and consists of Steve Monistere (bass), Sal Candilora (vocals), Pat Campbell (guitar and vocals), Buzzy Beano (guitar and vocals), Paul Garaudy (drums), and Paul Gamble (keyboards), and Dennis Zambon (saxophone). At first they tried a lot of different styles before settling into the primarily Sixties format they're in now. They retained the Topcats' name, according to Steve Monistere, "because otherwise it would have been hard for us to feed ourselves. The name helps you get in doors that a new band can't get into. Once we get into the door, we can prove ourselves and stay there. Unfortunately, when the public hears a spot on the radio, they think Fifties, and they don't come. We still get a few people who are disappointed that we're not doing the Fifties thing, especially out of town. But some people come expecting that and see what we're doing and like it more. They just come for the music and not the show. This band is geared more towards sound, and the other was geared more towards the show and the visuals."

The Topcats don't really like to talk about their history too much. Pat Campbell said, "Why don't you just say that the old band was together for a long time, but it didn't work out, and it's broke up now, and this is a new band." They're much more interested, of course, in what they're doing at present. At present for them means working five or six nights a week. Drummer Paul Garaudy says, "Our main gigs in town are the Palace and Fletcher's, and we also play at Ole



Pat Campbell, Paul Garaudy, Paul Gamble, Sal Candilora, Buzzy Beano, Steve Monistere (from left)



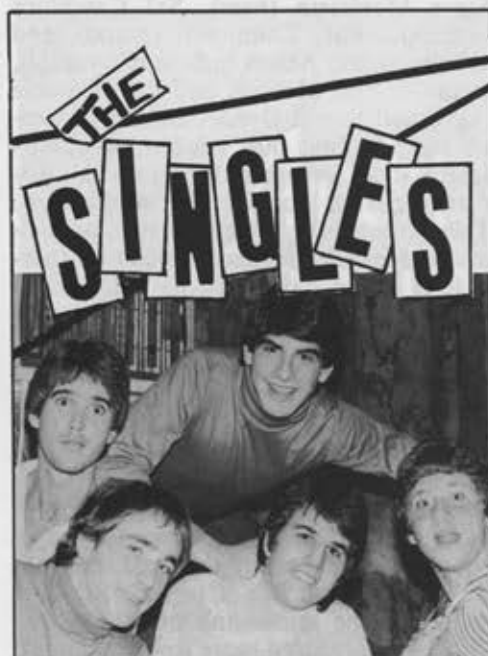


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Man River's and on the *S.S. President*. We recently opened for Chuck Berry and Jose Feliciano on the boat. We also play at the Iron Horse in Thibodaux and at Faces in Baton Rouge. We go over real well out of town, and we'd like to start doing it more."

Playing so much isn't easy on the band, but they have built up a following. According to singer Sal Candilora, "A lot of people come and see us over and over. They come just to see what kind of condition we're in, or to hear what Steve'll say between songs. We play a lot, but we don't just play to older crowds for nostalgia. We play to a lot of kids. They like the Sixties sound because it feels like rock music to them."

The Topcats' performances of the older songs are very adept. They're seasoned players, and with such a big band they're capable of handling almost anything. The Sixties classics — Beatles, Stones, Kinks, etc. — are their meat and potatoes, but they also do some more contemporary material, such as "Roxanne" by the Police, "Surrender" by Cheap Trick, "Born to Run" and "Tenth Avenue Freezeout" by Bruce Springsteen, and "Pump it Up" and "From a Whisper to a Scream" by Elvis Costello. However, what they're really interested in, like most musicians, is performing their own songs. Keyboardist Steve Accardo, who recently left the group for personal reasons, told me, "One thing about this band is that no one's really interested in showing off musically. They're more concerned with getting a good song with a good melody line and arranging it so that it could get on the radio and sell."

To this end they recently recorded a song for the WEZB-FM album of local bands. Paul Garaudy said, "The track for the B-97 album came out real good. We were all very satisfied with it. We recorded it at the Studio in the Country, and they really know what they're doing out there. They're very professional, and they know how to get a good sound. When we work up an original, we usually tear it apart completely, and it ends up totally different than it was written. And that's good, because we have to perform it with our sound. Our songs don't have any particular direction yet, because we're all still experimenting as writers. We'd play more originals if we had more time to rehearse, but we usually play five or six nights a week."

The dilemma now facing the Topcats is how they can play more originals without losing their audience. Sal Candilora says, "We still do a lot of covers, and we don't pretend to be doing anything that hasn't been done before. But keep in mind that our audience likes to hear covers. We believe that those covers support the originals. The audience accepts the originals easier if we also play something that they're familiar with."

As a matter of fact, all the times I've heard the Topcats play, the originals have gotten a better response than the covers. But according to Steve Monistere, the

band feels caught in a bind. "At this point it's either continue to do what we're doing, which we're very successful at, or play all originals, and take a whole lot longer developing our name. Unless you're a musician, or someone really in tune with music, if you go see a band playing all originals, it's boring. If you do that, your audience can stay at twenty or thirty people for a long time. We play the copy stuff to pay the bills."

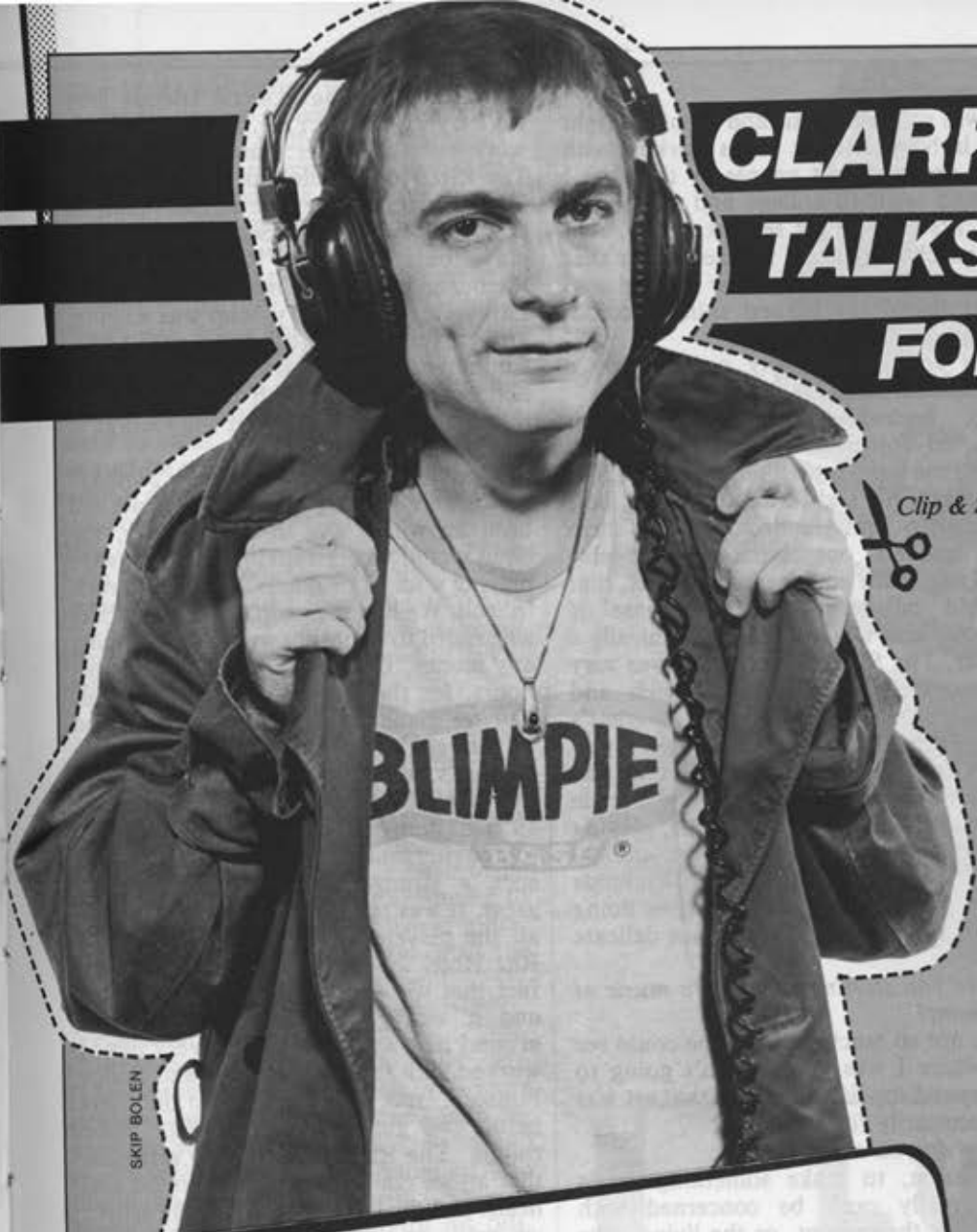
"No matter who you are, when you go onstage, you've got to be sure that what you're doing is what the audience is going to enjoy. And at this level — which is an unsigned band, playing to earn a living, trying to climb up the ladder — we're doing the right thing. It's stupid for any band that isn't signed to just go into the original thing and try and make it big. It's stupid. It doesn't make business sense. It just doesn't happen that way. We're getting ready to accelerate our development a bit more, and there may be a slowdown period for us, business-wise. When we start doing more originals, people may not accept it, at first. But we may lose one gig and pick up another. And we'll become more successful in certain clubs, like maybe Jed's or Jimmy's, where playing originals is expected. Right now at the Palace, they already accept pretty much anything we throw at them, if it's good quality. So we're hoping that if we start doing more originals, our audience may even get bigger."

Steve explained the economics of the operation. "We're compromising our music for the sake of business, and we know it. Face it, it's a business. You ask anyone who records for a major label if business plays a part in it, and they'll tell you it's 99% of it. It's really hard to have a three-man road crew, a six-member band, pay everybody, pay expenses, keep the quality of your sound system and your lighting show, and do all the necessary PR — just all the money you've got to spend to keep a level of consistency. The more money you've got, the better you can present yourself. And it's hard to do that unless you work a lot. We've pretty much spent all the money we need to spend. We've got the roadies, good lights, good sound, and all the tools that it'll take. Now we've just got to get down to the business of writing songs."

Steve Monistere sums it up. "So many bands started nine months ago when this new band got together. They do it their way — 'we're going to do all originals, and everybody's going to pay attention to us, and we're going to be stars.' They do that, and look where they are nine months later. Nowhere. Now look at the attitude we took, which at the very beginning was doing Fifties stuff for a couple of months, just to get in the clubs again. We've changed three or four times since then, and now we're pretty successful. To us, our accomplishments seem to be great, but the public doesn't see them. It's like we're our own little company, building from the inside. And we're going to keep building until the public notices us." □

# CLARK VREELAND

## TALKS ABOUT MUSIC, FOR ART'S SAKE



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**H**ow do you compare the relatively lasting effect of art to the often shortlived effect of music?

A hundred years from now you and I will both be dead. Will our children's children still recognize Lou Reed? Maybe. Will they recognize Barry Manilow? I don't think so. Maybe.

*What about records?*

Well, some of those records are going to be lost, and nobody's going to care. Of course, the Beatles will probably be remembered for the social impact if not the musical impact. The movements in the music—some of them will be remembered and some won't. But some of the visual arts won't make it either. That's the whole thing—are you going to make something that you can sell right now or that's going to last three or four or five hundred years? Of course, some things are really timeless—they have this style of the 1980's but they'll always be the same. Inside of that style there will be a content that is timeless, and that's what you're going for.

*In both music and visual art?*

Sure, it's the same thing. There are some things that are just as valid now as they were twenty years ago. I wonder why there was such a flourish there for a while and now it's petered off into this mediocrity. Not total mediocrity, sure there are some gifted artists out there, but there are no giant artists out there right now. All my heroes are dead.

*Why do you think that's happened—that it's sort of petered out?*

In between all great movements I think that it peters out. Before, the Rolling Stones and the Beatles had to literally take the clubs back in Southern England. There was a great movement in bebop jazz which has kind of crept back in now that rock 'n' roll has petered off again. I think New Orleans will always cater more to jazz than it would to mediocre new wave, but in Los Angeles that has crept in, just to keep the clubs happening. I know that there are giants, great artists, out there waiting just to come back in...And it's going to be from the ground up, probably, just as it was in the early Sixties—they'll have to literally take the clubs back, gain the territory, then go through the industry, learn their licks, and do the whole thing over again.

*Did you start playing music while you were still in college studying art or did*

For some time now, guitarist Clark Vreeland has been among the league leaders in the important PMA category—Percentage of Musicians in Attendance at his gigs. Maybe it's his ability to enumerate the plateaus of dislocation with his laconic chops and vocals; perhaps it's his uncanny knack—a knack written in stone by his spiritual sidekick at old Rhapsodizers gigs, Earl King—to always avoid the False Move. Whatever the reason, Vreeland has been involved in the musical transmission of dread since long before it became a popular movement, as evinced in his avoidance of being washed in that tide.

Clark Vreeland the painter, unbeknownst to some, has always been informed by and informed Clark Vreeland the guitarist; they get equal time in his candidacy. As such, this thoroughly New Orleans (De la Salle, UNO) mind is in the singular position to discuss where and how "a coupla awts" interface. Forthwith, then, the lowdown from the Stone Prince of Lower Gentilly.

By Tanya Coyle





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*that come after?*

I was playing drums and doing all right here in New Orleans. I was working with some pretty decent people by the time I left and went to college and I thought, well, it's time to get serious, and I went into psychology and I realized where that was at. I didn't really know what else to do...I found the highest thing I could, which was Fine Art.

*Did you plan at any point to be a professional artist?*

No, because—we're talking about 1968, '69—other people who were in art at the time were experimenting with LSD, hitchhiking to California, smoking pot, listening to Jimi Hendrix. I found three good teachers, out of the ten or twelve that I had in the course of my studies, that I could call teachers in the sense of someone who was not just academically a teacher. The first teacher I had was very intense. He went on to Antioch and became a very popular painter—that's Allen Jones—but he was with very pop things, a lot of airbrush, airguns and stuff, which relates heavily to the electric guitar...loud stacks of amplifiers, playing through sixteen 12-inch speakers and 400 watts—very similar to having 200 pounds of air pressure in a gun; you're doing something so extreme that it's a delicate thing.

*Were you starting to get into music at that point?*

No, not so much that, but he could see that where I was going wasn't going to live beyond my life. I learned that art was not necessarily for the living.

*How do you mean that?*

An artist, to make something that's valid, really can't be concerned with selling, or the present, or the living. The second teacher I had convinced me that some pop art was going to be good and some of it wasn't going to last. I was working totally in acrylic, air guns, the whole bit, just like a kid with a Les Paul, and he said 'Hey, look, you better sit down and listen to Segovia and pick up a classical guitar and learn some licks or you're gonna be up a creek.' He embarrassed me a great deal to get to that point. I tried to show him, and I switched over and got some oil paint and I learned about oil and pigment and doing that. Because at that point acrylic paint had gotten computerized, modular color, and they were getting so far into that art and advertising bit, with acrylics, that I think he saw that. He was very much into people like Jasper Johns and deKooning and Rothko. Rothko and Jackson Pollack are two of my favorite painters. I think Mark Rothko did more for me as far as influences, and his paintings are absolutely nothing—they're just so huge. They are so similar to the statement of loud rock 'n' roll music. They have so much presence and they're so unimposing... but their presence is so strong. He did a whole church in Houston that is very awe-inspiring.

I was left out in the cold for a while after he (the teacher) killed himself,

although I did have some friends who were trying to direct me. I was starting to work with Ed Volker. I had a group called The Ritz Hotel—this was around 1971 to '73. I was in college here at this point. In the group was Reggie Scanlan, who now plays bass with the Radiators; Bruce Raeburn, who came here with me from Lafayette; Becky Kury, who was singing; and Tim Youngblood and Steve Cunningham, who started the Mechanics, and who are now both doing different things. We were playing at Big George's, which was a biker club.

*What kind of music were you playing?*

We were playing music that, if we had been anywhere else in the country, the band would've been raking it in. We were playing a lot of originals, good solid rock 'n' roll. We had the people and everything we needed to do it, but we weren't making any money. One night we played for ten hours, for the Gooses and the Banditos, and we made three hundred dollars and we thought we were rich. We'd play at Big George's and 50 people would come and they'd all be on acid, right? You know, 1973. Timmy Youngblood is a master scorewriter and musician. At that time, such a strange period, the music was great. It was real serious rock 'n' roll and all the players were real good. But The Ritz Hotel was a major frustration in the fact that we were doing such fine music and it was going nowhere. The scene around here at that time was very dim. I worked with Bunny Matthews and Bobby Fonseca, too, somewhere up in there before we finally got The Ritz Hotel rolling. The Ritz Hotel was so articulate that all we could do was play to the acid heads and the intellectuals and the artists; we really couldn't get gigs at fraternity houses because it wasn't dance music. We could have played at Tipitina's if there had been a Tipitina's at that time. It was very articulate music, much more articulate than what followed, as far as I'm concerned, in my musical career. Everybody knew their parts so well.

*Meanwhile, you were still studying art in school?*

Yes. Then I met the third and final teacher, a very small German man named Aribert Munzner who grew up in North Africa and was involved in the Art Institute in Minneapolis, which is probably one of the finest schools in the world. They poured money into that place—you'd go to school there, a freshman, and you're working with video tape, serious plastics, whatever you want is at your disposal. He comes down here and we were still out in the old band building at UNO and nobody comes to class. He was on sabbatical; he was written up in *Dixie Roto* and a few other publications while he was here. People knew who he was.

*So Aribert comes down here and says 'What the hell's going on...?'*

He got some money for us to buy wood and canvas, materials, things that the school should have provided in the first place, but they didn't know that at the

time—UNO has gotten a lot better—the art department is *there* now. I started putting together really huge paintings, like seventeen by eleven feet. I would put them in triptychs, and he taught me how to work large. We got a lot of things for other artists to do while he was there. It's amazing what one pop artist can do in a community that's so dilemmaed. He came down here from up north, where the electricity was popping, and instilled a little adamic blood into the situation and uplifted everybody who was willing to come to class. He was so beyond them because he said 'You can do whatever you want to do. If you want to do it, I'll help you do it, and they were ready for 'Now draw that leg right...' and to him art was a form of expression. He was trying to say 'Hey, it's not dead.'

*Although you're still active in visual arts, your last major show was in 1977, right?*

Yes, that was at a gallery on Magazine Street, not too far from where Arthur Roger's is now, that was owned and operated by a critic that worked for the *Courier*, I believe, named Suzanne Fosberg. I was in the Rhapsodizers, I was really juggling both things. I have to be very relaxed to paint; I was beginning to deal with more people and live it more, and the more out there I got with the music, the less I was able to paint.

*So it was hard to combine the two?*

For me it was.

*What medium are you into now?*

Petroleum—oil by-products. No more plastics. I'm still fooling around with car enamels, heavy chemicals. We're about to go through some serious radiation and pollution, I think. And if not, Michelangelo did all right with his oils. Now they've found out that acrylic breaks down in 12 years under flourescent light, and it's only been around for 20 years—and there's even stronger stuff than linseed oil to put pigment in.

*How important is being recognized...?*

You mean fame. How important is fame to me? I'd rather be posthumously famous. We're entering a strange time; I was just getting to know Fess a little bit before he died. And he was a prince; he was a king, actually, in this realm, in this little village that we're in. I feel the same way about myself—I have what I want.

*So you feel that you are successful, within yourself?*

In a sense—if I could or should perpetrate my doctrines or beliefs or emotions. Things that I talk about in my music. A lot of my music has not been heard. That's another thing. I've entrusted cases of recordings to people. It's very difficult for me to deal with selling that. That's why it's so hard for me to get that worried about it. Some of it is theological. Rock 'n' roll theology is not popular now. We are entering a strange time...Things are getting more localized, you're seeing princes that don't want to leave their areas. They would be more insecure being popular on a national level, they would lose their security. I'm starting



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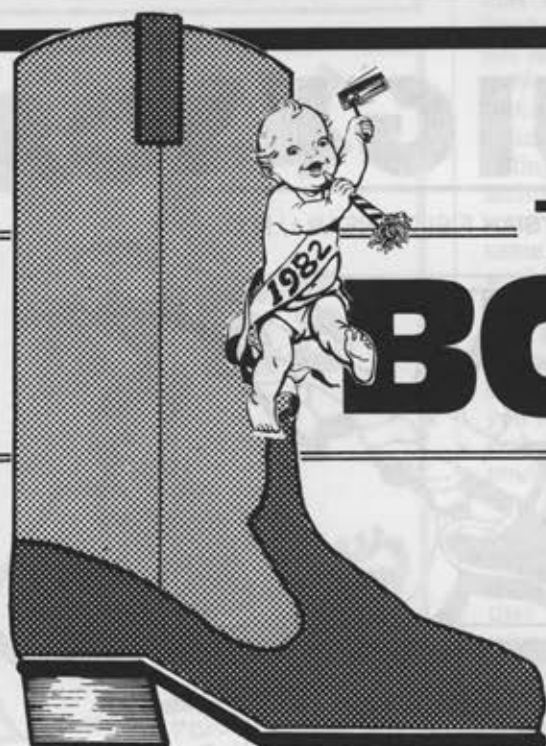
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to witness these things happening right here. Earl King is a perfect example. He's written tunes that are played all over the world; in Japan they get on the ground and kiss his feet. The same thing with Booker in Germany. But in New Orleans they have their families, their friends—the people that know them may not feel in awe of them when they get in a room with them but that's the way they want it. Would you want to be constantly walking around feeling like you were a star? I've tasted that a little bit and I don't care for it. I don't mind feeling like that when I'm in someone else's territory but when I'm in my territory I like to feel comfortable, I like to be in control of things, I like people to know where I'm at and I like to know where they're at.

*How would you feel about being nationally recognized in visual art?*

I wouldn't mind that.

*And this is the same way you feel about your music?*

It's just the same. It's all the same. Right now I'm so out of both and into extraneous things that I'm living it. Right here at this table I'm living it.

*Do you have any particular comments on the current scene, musically or visually?*

There's a credibility gap. Art is life. Like the Sex Pistols...they had their art together, they knew the statement in the media that they were going to make. When they got to the point of making it, they made it and got out. That was the name of the game—what were they going to do? Become jaded out? Make the Sex Pistol's second album? What more could they say? They made the statement and that was it. It was that devo sort of thing, that de-evolution; they said 'Look, you aimed us at destruction, well here it is.' They weren't going to try and capitalize on the music industry. They could have, but that would have degraded them more than it had ever degraded any group in existence. As a footnote, one of the members died in the most ridiculous circumstances and his death really flew the banner for the whole artistic achievement...as sad as that may have been. He's another hero who died for many young people now, I think, who are following what they call the 'punk-rock' category, or whatever. Just like Brian Jones was for many people, Hendrix, Joplin, Lennon, it's another tragic case of rock 'n' roll...but that's rock 'n' roll and that's art. Art is a part of life. Visual arts, I have always thought, have gone before music by at least thirty or forty years, as far as socially, intellectually, where the people were at that were doing it. Dadaism really foreshadowed the coming of the whole thing, from James Dean all the way to Sid Vicious. They said 'As soon as I make a piece of art, I'm going to destroy it'; it got to be that whole frenetic thing—it's like 'ugly is as pretty ever was'—the act of doing it supercedes anything. As soon as you make a painting it's dead, whereas the act of doing it is the art. □



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Filmed in black and white and VistaVision

#### THE CREDITS

A Paramount Picture. Produced by Hal B. Wallis. Directed by Michael Curtiz. Associate Producer, Paul Nathan. Screenplay by Herbert Baker and Michael Vincente Gazzo. Based on the novel, *A Stone for Danny Fisher* by Harold Robbins. Director of Photography, Russell Harlan. Art Direction, Hal Pereira and Joseph MacMillan Johnson. Set Decoration by Sam Comer and Frank McKelvy. Editorial Supervision by Warren Low. Special Photographic Effects, John P. Fulton. Process Photography, Farciot Edouart. Costumes by Edith Head. Makeup Supervision, Wally Westmore. Hair Style Supervision, Nellie Manley. Assistant Director, D. Michael Moore. Sound Recording by Harold Lewis and Charles Grenzbach. Musical Numbers Staged by Charles O'Curran. Music Adapted and Scored by Walter Scharf. Vocal Accompaniment by The Jordanaires. Technical Advisor, Col. Tom Parker. Dialogue Coach, Norman Stuart. Westrex Recording System.

#### THE CAST

Elvis Presley (Danny Fisher); Carolyn Jones (Ronnie); Dolores Hart (Nellie); Dean Jagger (Mr. Fisher); Liliane Montevecchi ("Forty" Nina); Walter Matthau (Maxie Fields); Jan Shepard (Mimi); Paul Stewart (Charlie LeGrand); Vic Morrow (Shark).

#### THE SONGS

"As Long As I Have You," "Don't Ask Me Why," "Hard-Headed Woman," "King Creole," "Lover Doll," "New Orleans," "Young Dreams," "Trouble," "Crawfish," "Take My Hand."

#### THE STORY

Downtrodden but sullen throughout, Danny's a guy whose papa can't hold a job, whose diploma from high school has just been cancelled, and who's smack dab in trouble with racketeers, to boot. He's also a guy who's out to prove that if you can beat 'em you don't have to join 'em. On stage in the hoodlum-infested Bourbon Street dive, Danny's guitar isn't nearly as loud to Nellie, the girl from the soda fountain, as is the sound of wedding bells. The singer's leaning, however, is toward Ronnie, the wayward but wonderful property of Maxie, the meanie. Ronnie's too scared to wink back. A double dose of double cross and Danny mows the mothers over suffering a scratch or two himself. He's spirited away and cared for by Ronnie until Maxie tracks them down. Bang. Bye, Ronnie. Bang. Bye, Maxie. So, Danny grabs his guitar and goes back on stage. That's show biz.

## KING CREOLE

Elvis Presley had made three pictures prior to this, and their critical reception had been fairly predictable. That's why *King Creole* came as somewhat of a jolt. It proved what no Elvis movie had proved before or would ever prove again.

The *New York Times* reviewer put it like this: "As the lad himself might say, cut my legs off and call me shorty! Elvis Presley can act."

The movie had put New Orleans into a frenzy already. When the film company arrived here for location shooting, security became a primary concern. The company occupied the entire top floor of the Roosevelt Hotel (now Fairmont) and the whole hotel was in a constant twitter. Pinkerton guards patrolled elevators, exits, even the star's suite. Every night the crowds in the lobby and in front of the hotel were so thick that Presley had to go up to a room in an adjoining building, cross the roof, and enter the hotel by a fire escape.

He seldom went out on the town. He and his entourage played touch football on the carpet of his suite. And after a day's work the group would hole up there and have waiters bring in pizza and junk food.

One night Presley wanted to go to dinner

at Antoine's but the ever-present Colonel Parker said no. The singer was bitterly disappointed, prompting producer Hal Wallis to later recall, "When I saw the expression on his face I realized the price he paid for being a superstar."

#### Production Note

Presley never felt at ease in the cavernous recording room at Paramount. Instead, he preferred a small rented studio where he recorded at night, since he hated to work in the mornings or even the afternoon.

He and his group never bothered with arrangements. They would doodle around, improvise and ad-lib for hours, then finally they'd rehearse a number straight through.

Wallis reported that Presley seemed to know instinctively what he wanted in a song and could sense immediately if an instrument or lyric wasn't right. It wasn't unusual for the singer to have the control room technicians repeat a number 15 or 20 times before he was satisfied.

—Don Lee Keith

\*That stands for New Orleans Music In Film, of course, the subject being explored by Don Lee Keith in a special *Wavelength* series. This is the third movie to be dealt with individually. Coming up: *Dixiana*.



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By J. E. Johnson

# THE GOSPEL OF BESSIE GRIFFIN

**She has donned the robe of her late friend Mahalia Jackson as the nation's personification of the grandness of gospel music. She wears it well.**

**B**essie Griffin came home to New Orleans late last fall—not to sing for her home town folks but to bury her son, 32-year old Spencer Jackson, Jr. He was shot to death on Claiborne Avenue in New Orleans shortly after he and a friend left a lounge to take a look at a new car one of them had bought. About a month earlier, her pianist and accompanist of twenty-one years, Charles Burnett, had been stabbed to death in his apartment in Los Angeles shortly after he and Mrs. Griffin returned to this country following an overseas tour.

So, in addition to her obvious distress over the loss of a son whom she cherished, Mrs. Griffin faces the arduous task of having to replace an accompanist who knew her so well that she never had to practice to prepare for a concert. Barnett knew every song she sang. He knew what she could do and what she couldn't do; he could anticipate what she would probably do and he could follow precisely where she eventually went in a song.

However, despite what she has lost and what she faces having to do, Bessie Griffin granted an interview this trip home to discuss her career as a professional gospel singer. She spoke in terms of going on from here and in deep appreciation of where she has been so far.

Bessie Griffin started recording in 1947; she toured the states in the Fifties, made nightclub and television appearances in the late Fifties and early Sixties, college tours later in the Sixties, and overseas concert tours in the Seventies. She is one of the last of the great traditional gospel music divas from the Mahalia Jackson era who is still singing. Her most recent album, *Bessie Griffin: Negro Spirituals, Gospel Songs, Live in Europe* on Carrere records, was released in Europe in 1981.

Despite international recognition as a gospel prima donna, she talked this trip about the lack of attention she experiences from promoters in her own home town. "I'm a native daughter



here," says Bessie, "but the promoters don't bring me here." She explained that she has only been invited to perform via prearrangement and in concert about three times in the past ten years—even though she visits New Orleans about twice a year.

Even though she relocated in Los Angeles over twenty years ago, Bessie Griffin will always be a native daughter of New Orleans. More than fifty years ago, she started to display her talent before local church congregations. She recalled how folks used to put her up on a table so that she could be seen and heard singing those old Dr. Watts hymns that remain a vibrant part of her repertoire.

Born in a house on Second Street in New Orleans, her mother, Victoria Broil, named her Arlette B. Broil. As a child, she got teased about her name, so she changed it around, made the "B." stand for Bessie, and became Bessie A. Broil. Bessie's mother died when she was only five years old, so she was raised by a grandmother, Mrs. Lucy Narcisse, a strict disciplinarian and member of the Baptist and later the Spiritual Churches where Bessie began her singing.

As the early Negro slaves used the Spirituals to send coded messages to each other, Bessie, as a child, used her developing sensitivity to church music to deliver messages to her grandmother after she had disciplined Bessie in some way. Bessie says she wouldn't sass but would sing songs like "I Been 'Buked And I Been Scorned," "I Wish I Had Died When I Was Young," and "Sometimes I Feel Like A Motherless Child" to express her special displeasure. Her grandmother

remarked once, "I know what you doing," for message-loaded work songs were a part of her ancestry too.

Lucy Narcisse was a seamstress by trade and she wanted to teach Bessie to sew and to cook and to wash—not because she thought in terms of traditional job classifications for females, but because her hard-times heritage had taught her that you never know what you may have to do in this world to make it. At this, Bessie cried her heart out and emphatically declared to her grandmother, "I'm not going to be a seamstress. I'm going to be a songster. I'm not going to wash dishes and I'm not going to sew. I'm going everywhere singing." Lucy Narcisse died before the truth in these prophetic words was fully realized.

In the late Forties and early Fifties, numerous gospel singers coming to New Orleans heard about Bessie Griffin. Local folks talked up their hometown talent, and the visitors would invite her to sing on their shows. They all told her to leave New Orleans for her career, and many promised to send for her to sing with them.

When Mahalia Jackson came to town—that is, came back home to do a show for her own home folks—she also wanted to meet Bessie Griffin, especially since folks were comparing the two of them so much. They did meet and Bessie sang at her New Orleans concert, and Mahalia promised to send for Bessie to do her anniversary concert in Chicago later that year. "Yeah...like all the rest," Bessie told her then husband, Spencer Jackson. (She had become Bessie Griffin through an earlier marriage.) But unlike



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all the rest, Mahalia Jackson kept her word. She did send for Bessie to sing in her concert later that year.

Some friends who believed in her potential pitched in and got her a beautiful robe to wear for the occasion. The robe was stolen almost as soon as they got to Chicago, but this mishap was unable to ruin the night. Mahalia loaned her a robe to do the concert, and Bessie made her Chicago debut before 42,000 fans gathered in the Coliseum for an all-star concert. After the unknown artist from New Orleans finished singing the very popular "Come Ye Disconsolate," they were shouting for an encore. She came back with the new Herbert Brewster

**'I'm not going to be a seamstress. I'm going to be a songster. I'm not going to wash dishes and I'm not going to sew. I'm going everywhere singing.'**

hymn, "How I Got Over," and Bessie stole the show. According to Tony Heilbut, author of *The Gospel Sound*, "Mahalia, the Dixie Hummingbirds, and Rosetta Tharpe couldn't do a thing afterwards."

In spite of what folks thought, Bessie says that no professional rivalry ever existed between herself and Mahalia Jackson. The singers possessed great similarities in their style of delivery and tone of voice, and Bessie had certainly proven herself to be a leading contender for the champion title then held by Mahalia. But according to Bessie, the two developed a sincere friendship that lasted until Mahalia's death in 1971. The program for Mahalia's funeral included Bessie Griffin singing a number recorded by Mahalia, "Move On Up A Little Higher."

The Chicago trip marked the start of Bessie's domestic tours in the Fifties, and also some of the hardest times of her professional life. She recalls the road experiences with the Caravans as the roughest, remembering days when they slept all day without eating, sang somewhere that night, and after expenses made only enough to buy a very meager dinner. They'd make only enough money to do the same thing again the next day. "I can appreciate what I'm getting now," says Bessie, "because I've paid my dues."

In 1958 Bessie took the earlier advice of friends and other artists and moved away from New Orleans, and in 1959 she was in some ways starting to "make it" on the West Coast. Many church people complained that Bessie had "crossed over"

A black and white photograph of a woman singing into a vintage microphone. She has dark, curly hair and is looking upwards with her mouth open. She is wearing a dark dress with a prominent white lace collar. Her hands are clasped in front of her. The photograph is tilted slightly to the right and is set against a light background with a faint grid pattern.

Bessie Griffin continues to measure success in terms of the fulfillment of her childhood dream to "go everywhere singing." At 56 years old, still a commanding prima donna, Bessie experiences the fulfillment of her basic desire over and over. For her, this is professional satisfaction, to be able to sing and moan and move herself and others in "the spiritual way," not for money but for the moment. The moment when the song and Bessie and the audience become one—one with emotion, with energy, with meaning—one event, one gospel excellence. □

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## THE YEAR IN JAZZ

New albums, Xenia, Tyler's, the Jazz Federation, and cooperation from local media made for a positive year.

It is apparent that there is substantial food for thought in reviewing the jazz of 1981 in New Orleans. Considering the disagreement among historians and jazz critics regarding the importance of New Orleans to jazz music, it can be very important for jazz lovers to keep a sharp eye on strides made in the local music scene.

The picture for 1981 is very positive. While major jazz groups are not brought into the city with regularity and New Orleans musicians have to leave the city to get their music recorded and listened to outside of New Orleans, a jazz scene is developing here, comprised of musicians of high caliber who are coming to New Orleans to live and play. These imported musicians are interacting with the local cats to get the whole scene fired up. This trend is marked by an increase in local record production, development of an exciting live jazz scene, and increased media involvement in jazz.

Tony Dagradi's *Oasis* was released at the end of 1980, but didn't really begin catching on until well into the spring of '81. Dagradi moved to New Orleans about four years ago, and by the looks of things, will keep the Crescent City as his home base for some time to come. *Oasis* was recorded with a group of New York musicians with whom Tony has been associated over the years. For his next projects, he will make use of talents available in this city. *Oasis* is one of the few LPs coming out of New Orleans in 1981 that has strong bop influence.

Ramsey McLean's album came out shortly after the beginning of the year, and while *History's Made Every Moment*, *New Orleans Now!* has strong bop roots, the music here relies more heavily on collective improvisation. Anyone who has seen Ramsey McLean and the Lifers perform will not find this surprising. Ramsey covers a large stylistic territory throughout the record, an ambitious task that results in a superb musical statement by a tall, lanky bass player with a very musical head.

Some folks might object to including the Neville's album *Fiyo on the Bayou* in a discussion of jazz, but since Charles Neville can't blow a note that isn't firmly rooted in jazz, the inclusion here is natural. With *Fiyo*, the Nevilles were picked up by a major record company and spent several weeks



gravitating around position 170 on Billboard's Top LPs chart. Because A&M Records felt it necessary to overproduce the funky Nevilles sound, *Fiyo* became the best pop album released in 1981 instead of the powerful R&B record that it could have been. There is no question, of course, as to which endeavor is more financially profitable. The brothers are now keeping good company, opening concerts for the Rolling Stones, and may soon be able to record their music without the heavy hand of an overcautious producer.

Ron Cuccia's second album emerged sometime last spring. *Music from the Big Tomato* is a different approach from Ron's first LP, with some changes in the band, and the Youth Inspirational Choir on hand to assist in creating a truly one-of-a-kind musical experience. The blending of Ron's poetry and lyrics with the R&B and gospel influenced music is truly moving. Considering that great originality precludes learning from the mistakes of others, the depth and perfection displayed here are stunning.

Toward the end of 1981, yet a different style of jazz appeared on record, premiered by the New Jazz Quintet. The NJQ produced *High Energy Design*. The use of electronic instruments here is a compliment to the medium. Few groups have used electronic instrumentation with such sensitivity and good taste. The album illustrates the difference between well-produced and overproduced. In *High Energy Design*, the various effects are well-produced and augment the music without dominating it.

...

The live jazz scene was given a shot in the arm last year as Xenia Foundation began regularly bringing in jazz musicians with national reputations and backing them with New Orleans musicians. Highlights of the two 1981 seasons were Ricky Ford, Mose Allison, John Scofield, and Sonny Fortune. So far the endeavor has not been a financial success, but the folks who attend come away very satisfied. In addition to shows, the musicians brought here gave workshops that

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While Xenia was attracting great musicians to come through the area, one jazz musician came to New Orleans under his own influence to live and play. James Drew is the pianist who has literally taken the jazz community by storm. Since his arrival here, Drew has propelled the Earl Turbinton Quartet to new heights. Drew also performs a duet with Turbinton at Tyler's Sunday evenings that is a consistent jazz highlight in the city. The relaxed session gives both performers ample room to stretch out without the restrictions of the group setting. There is a communication in these duo performances that simply can't arise out of the inherent business of a group environment. Very recently, Drew has found a rewarding home for his jazz performing in the Paul McGinley Quartet, with bassist Bill Huntington and John Vidacovich on drums. The fire and empathy on display in the McGinley Quartet makes that group's emergence in 1981 noteworthy and marks an important trend that we have to look forward to. McGinley is a member of Woody Herman's band and at this writing, Woody Herman's Place was set to open on December 26. The benefits of having a resident big band of such high caliber in the city are obvious. Hopefully, Woody's musicians will also seek other settings for playing their music.

Several musicians in 1981 transplanted the roots of jazz into our modern world. Danny Barker and the Jazz Hounds and the Dirty Dozen Brass Band approached this task in somewhat different ways. Danny Barker presented his authentic blues-influenced jazz with a convincing show of its timelessness. The Dirty Dozen, on the other hand, began with what we consider traditional jazz, but fused it with modern elements and Caribbean influence. All of these musicians have been doing this for some time, but are experiencing a surge in popularity.

Jazz attracted more attention from the media last year. Topping the list of jazz media venues is the growth of WWOZ-radio. Aside from getting a program schedule down on paper, 'OZ's major accomplishment in 1981 was to give local musicians a forum for their music and views on a program called *Spotlight*. *Spotlight* premiered during the summer, and brought New Orleans musicians into the studio to play tapes and records of their music and discuss their philosophies. 'OZ also began broadcasting live concerts from the Contemporary Arts Center and Tipitina's.

Other New Orleans radio stations stepped up efforts to bring national sounds to the airwaves. WWNO has added *Blues in the Night* to its early morning jazz lineup, and *Jazz Tonight* is a two-hour program of highly improvised or free jazz recorded over the last twenty or so years. WYLD-FM also began giving contemporary jazz records a place on the air with the Sunday afternoon *Extensions from Congo Square*. While the transitions from one style to another are sometimes abrupt on *Extensions*, it is encouraging to hear mainstream jazz sounds on commercial radio.

New Orleans musicians also made it onto the TV screen last year as WYES-TV recorded Ellis Marsalis and sons, Al Belletto, Pete Fountain, and others as part of the *Jazz Excursions* series. WGNO-TV gave local musicians needed exposure on the *Homegrown* series. The program covered a broad spectrum of music available in the city, from the Nevilles to The Cold.

In looking back on 1981, we must take notice of the activities of the Louisiana Jazz Federation. The Federation sponsored Jazz Awareness Month during October, a campaign to call attention to the rich musical environment in New Orleans. The existence of the Jazz Federation indicates a positive trend in jazz in the city. The jazz community in New Orleans must be organized into a united front if musicians are to have the freedom to create, to be free from having their talents exploited, and to have their music enjoyed by as many people as can be reached. If the Federation is used as the clearing house to bring together all elements of the jazz community, there can be no question about the contribution of New Orleans to jazz in this country.

For the near future, the Louisiana Jazz Federation is preparing to seek funding for a series of jazz radio programs surveying the current live jazz scene in the city. These programs will be recorded during live club gigs and will be offered to public radio stations nationally over National Public Radio's satellite system. The Federation is also keeping alive the Jazz Hotline. By calling 482-7185, one can find out about live jazz shows in the city.

1982 may turn out to be just as positive as its predecessor. Tony Dagradi and Astral Project expect to release *Lunar Eclipse* in March. Musicians for Music is making it possible for albums to be released by James Black, Jasmine, and Jimmy Robinson and Woodenhead, with others to come in the not too distant future.

Xenia already has Arnette Cobb and Richie Bierach booked for January. Ellis Marsalis will be playing piano with Arnette Cobb, and the rhythm section will probably be completed by Jim Singleton and John Vidacovich.

While no radio or TV stations have plans to add to existing jazz lineups, it also seems that there are no cuts planned. WYES-TV has just finished constructing a \$5.5 million remote van which will be used in recording in live club settings.

What remains is for tourists coming to New Orleans to be informed about the variety of good music available in the city. Visitors should know what to look for when they stray from Bourbon Street. If this city thrives on tourism, then the only way that jazz can survive with creative vitality is to work with the system. This doesn't mean compromise, but it does require taking advantage of every available outlet for exposure and organization. If present trends continue, some day soon there will be no grounds for cities elsewhere to doubt New Orleans' contributions to America's indigenous artform — jazz.

—Brad Palmer

## A COMPENDIUM FROM THE DEAN OF RECORD REVIEWERS

*Christgau's Record Guide  
Rock Albums of the Seventies*  
By Robert Christgau  
Ticknor & Fields \$9.95

**R**ock music critics are not normal people. Robert Christgau, in the introduction to his new book *Christgau's Record Guide*, warns that "critics, predisposed toward novelty by overexposure, perceive music differently from ordinary fans." This is undoubtedly true, and he should know, since he claims to "monitor ninety percent of the albums that come my way—at least 1,500 a year." That's more than most people will acquire in a lifetime. Such a claim lends a tone of authority to his pronouncements that manages to overcome our suspicion of someone who is not an "ordinary fan" by a longshot.

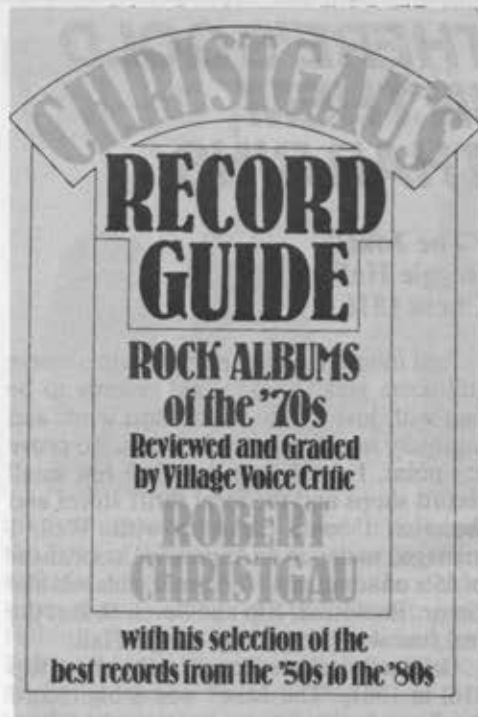
Christgau, in fact, is often referred to as the "dean of American rock critics." Although this title suggests that he has a school of followers, which is not exactly the case, he is an influential and widely read commentator. As the current music editor of the New York weekly newspaper *Village Voice*, he writes occasional articles and contributes a monthly "Consumer Guide," a page or so of capsule reviews of current albums. Each record receives a few sentences of notation and a letter grade (from A to E with pluses and minuses), and the column is one of the best ways to keep up with the latest releases. Christgau has now compiled these reviews into book form to give an overview of the Seventies, "a much misunderstood musical decade," as he calls it. This *Record Guide* is likely to become one of the most useful rock books ever published, as opposed to informative or entertaining, which it is as well.

It may seem inadvisable to accept one man's opinions as a valuable guide to record purchases, but in criticism an individual's admittedly quirky judgments can be more helpful than judgments arriv-

ed at by committee. Anyone who has read any amount of music or film criticism knows that all reviews are not equal; the best method of reviewing the reviews is to get to know who you're reading and what their prejudices are.

In this respect, it is worthwhile to compare Christgau's book with the *Rolling Stone Record Guide*, its only real competition. The reviews in *Rolling Stone* were written by a rather large number of critics under editorial direction so that different critics could specialize in their preferred fields. Surprisingly enough, that book contains quite a bit of misinformation, while I found that Christgau's book contained virtually no factual errors. Add to that a more refined grading system (the *Rolling Stone* book uses a five-star system) and a more defined field of reference (the *Rolling Stone* book attempts to rate all "in print" records, which means that each new edition will be instantly obsolete) and you have a better book. Christgau also keeps the consumer of limited means, i.e., almost everybody, in mind by noting when the same tracks are repeated from album to album and by listing the total playing time if it falls below thirty minutes.

You don't even have to work to discover Christgau's quirks, since he lays them out in the open from the start. "I admit my prejudices," he says "I dislike most rock improvisation, and am suspicious of even the most innocent pretensions, while I am perhaps unnaturally disposed toward soul music and anything that reveals a trace of wit." He also describes his main preoccupations as "beat, electricity, and song," further defining beat as "rhythm (especially polyrhythm...), repetition (rock as electronic trance music and vice versa), and tempo (faster, faster)." All this translates into a distaste for art-rock and boogie, a weakness for punk, funk (James Brown, K.C. & the Sunshine Band, and



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## RARE RECORDS

# THERE'S GOLD IN THEM THAR BINS

"The Joke"  
Reggie Hall  
Chess 1816

Last month I made a point that there were still some great hard-to-find records to be had with just a little bit of hard work and ingenuity sacrificed instead of cash. To prove my point, I decided to browse a few small record shops and the local thrift stores and see what I could come up with. Well, I managed to dig up an impressive assortment of 45's on some small independent labels like Gatur, Bo Sound, Rip and Seven B. But the real find was this gem by Reggie Hall.

Originally released on Rip Records (Rip 816) in 1961, "The Joke" was a big record locally and stirred some interest with Chess Records in Chicago, which agreed to distribute it nationally. Rip Records, the owner of Rip, also managed to lease some other material to Chess, so it could get a push nationally.

The record itself is a catchy, hilarious

*Continued from page 33.*

Funkadelic rate very high), and formalist pop (such as Creedence and Big Star, and, later, the Shoes and the Scruffs), and a distinct lack of disco-phobia. Not to mention the fact that he is politically astute and quick to decry latent racism and sexism in musicians.

Local music fans will be interested to know that Christgau is a big fan of New Orleans music. All the early Meters' albums rate very high, and he often uses them as a yardstick to measure other funk albums against (and beat them with). Lee Dorsey and Dr. John do very well, and *The Wild Magnolias* and *The Wild Tchoupitoulas* are obviously two of his favorite party records. His description of his "Allen Toussaint fixation" is not totally flattering, but he certainly respects him as a producer. And *Crawfish Fiesta* was selected as one of 1980's best.

The grades are far from the most important feature of this book. The brevity of the format forces Christgau to make every word count, and he can be very illuminating at times—for example, when he refers to "the lost-in-a-gold-mine inconsistency of Stevie Wonder and John Lennon." In describing Elvis' singing he says, "Despite his capacity for undifferentiated emotion and his utter confidence with almost every kind of American music, Presley didn't automatically impart dignity to everything he laid his voice on, the way such natural singers as George Jones and Al Green and Dolly Parton do." In his review of *Talking Heads '77* he observes that "in the end the record proves not so much that the detachment of



novelty. My favorite line goes like this:

"They say that Old Big Palladin,  
Have gun will travel,  
But he really shovelled gravel."

According to Reggie, Wardell Quezergue arranged and played piano, Seals played bass, Smokey Johnson played drums, and Fred Kemp supplied the tight tenor sax.

Reggie recalls, "It did pretty well here and I know it sold well in Los Angeles and Detroit. Fats told me he heard it up in Maryland. Boy I sure wish I still had a copy."

— Almost Slim

craft can coexist with a frightening intensity of feeling—something most artists know—but that the most inarticulate rage can be rationalized. Which means they're punks after all." But it's also fun when he comes down off the high horse and gets really nasty, as, for example, when he says that Dory Previn "doesn't just belabor a cliché, she flails it with barbed wire," or when, in reference to James Taylor's *Gorilla*, he writes, "although this is better than *Walking Man*, so is *The Best of the Cowsills*."

Not everyone will want to read this book straight through like I did, but many will find it very helpful if they want to catch up on records that they missed the first time around. Sadly, consumers may be surprised to discover how many fine records from the early Seventies have gone out of print. *Sic transit gloria*. My only complaint is that Christgau seems to have re-written many, if not most, of the reviews here. Often two grades are given, the original and the final. I suppose time-tested opinions are to be favored over spur of the moment ones, but he does not always indicate which reviews have been changed. A minor reservation, in any case. Christgau may be egotistical—he admits that he "always believed that rock criticism should piss people off"—but it's impossible to dislike someone who says that "most of the records I like work some variation on good-melodies-with-a-snappy-beat. This formula is one of the best substitutes for intelligence known to humankind." And we should look forward to his book on the Eighties.

—Steve Alleman

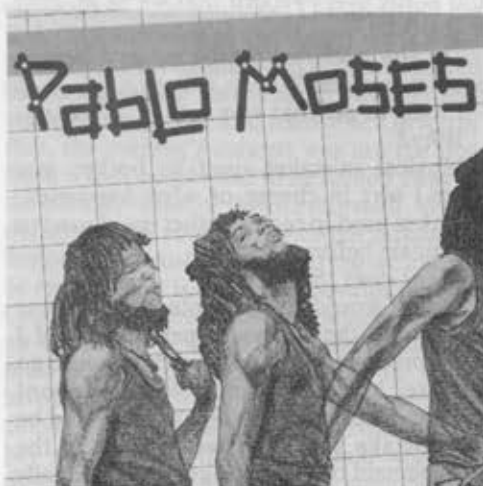
## THE VOICE OF MOSES

Moses's slow and relaxed delivery seduces the listener into the musical flow. It's then that one discovers the power of the lyrics.

While roots reggae enthusiasts argue it takes nothing more than repeated listening to the music to become aware of the surprising diversity of rhythms, the majority of first-time listeners never get beyond the initial alienation caused by the lyrics. The alternative? Reggae "soul" singers, accompanied by musicians who know how to employ studio tricks that instantly hook the listener. But this "lover's rock," while having much the same grabbing power as disco music, is in most cases equally disposable unless the singer is someone exceptional.

An unexpected new album by Pablo Moses serves to remind me that there is another alternative. Back in 1975, when reggae was young, Pablo Moses collaborated with keyboardist/producer Geoffrey Chung to record *Revolutionary Dream*, one of the all-time great reggae albums. The album stands out from most records of that period because of the interplay between Moses' vocals and the instruments, which seem to blend into one overall effect. There are few singers who have the ability, like Moses, to make their voices sound like one of the instruments. This allows producer Chung to weave the instruments around Moses, creating an eerie, unsettling sound. This also enables the listener to experience the total sound without having to rely on the lyrics. Pablo Moses is a Rasta, and his messages are powerful statements that are as unsettling as the music itself. But in the manner of Winston Rodney (Burning Spear), they're delivered in a soft-spoken, musical voice to which the listener can choose to really listen or merely hear. Nothing could make this point clearer than the Burning Spear performance last May in New Orleans. On that night, Spear sang almost no lyrics, yet sang in every song.

There was a slightly boring similarity to everything that Spear's band played, however, that definitely is not found in Pablo Moses' music. While Spear uses horns to fill out the sound, Moses makes use of organ, synthesizer, horns, lead guitar, and a multitude of percussion instruments. Credit must be given to Geoffrey Chung for his spare, tasteful use of each of these instruments which never gives way to that busy, wall-of-sound effect that many reggae artists are opting for these days. Chung, well known for his



musical association with Ras Michael and the Sons of Negus, is responsible for rich, melodic arrangements that at the same time skank along in the best reggae fashion. And this is the unique beauty of Pablo Moses' music. It is melodic, rhythmic, almost Eastern in its sound due to the prevalence of minor scales and the strange, reed-like timbre of Moses' voice. (If Burning Spear sings like a muted trumpet, Pablo Moses is an oboe.) And again like Spear, Moses' delivery is always slow and relaxed, capable of seducing the listener into the musical flow. It's then that one discovers the power of the lyrics. From the title song on *Revolutionary Dream* to "Each Is A Servant" and "I See It Everyday" on his newest albums, Moses reveals himself to be an astute observer and a master of understatement.

It took five years for Moses to release a follow-up to *Revolutionary Dream* (this album, currently out of print, is still available in cut-out racks as *I Love I Bring* on the United Artists' Anthology of Reggae Collectors Series, Vol. 7). His next album, entitled *A Song*, is in every way an equal to *Dream*, with the added feature of improved recording quality. The instruments ring out on this album, especially the timbales and other percussion instruments. And unexpectedly, less than a year later, Moses has released his third album, *Pave The Way*. Although this album has all the Moses characteristics, it rocks harder, with some heavy funk drumming by Mikey "Boo" Richards. Richards' new drumming style, along with the inclusion of the song "It's A Trick," in which the rhythm sections sounds like "Suck Da Heads...", makes me wonder if the Radiators' albums are making their way down to Jamaica.

So for those interested in taking a chance on a reggae album, or in expanding their reggae collection to include one of Jamaica's most unique artists, any of these Pablo Moses albums will be welcome additions. My personal favorite is *A Song*, but then there must be a market for *Pave The Way* among those who want to know what it would sound like if Radiators' drummer Frank Bua moved to Jamaica.

—Gene Scaramuzzo

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# ALLEN TOUSSAINT

[Cont. from page 13]

*Have there been any people who directly influenced your outlook on life? I don't mean in a general sense. All of us have influences, but I mean is there somebody you can point to and say "that person really taught me to deal with such and such," or "this book, this writer gave me ideas which..."?*

My father. Things like "let your ears be bigger than your mouth." I really thought about that. Sometimes I sacrifice my mouth for ears. The mouth is the American custom. I consider his advice very important. It goes into the general thing about how much you are willing to accept before you give out what you think you are intelligent enough to be responsible for.

*Are you concerned about being a commercial success? I'm sure you're concerned about whether a tune works or doesn't work for an artist, but are you concerned about being a commercial success as a producer?*

Yes. Yes, because I have accepted the responsibility of producing other people and they put their careers in my hands. So I feel a responsibility there, an obligation to be up on what I'm about. I'm about being a producer who makes records that sell — not only to make records that I enjoy — but to do them with good quality and good taste. I try to enjoy everything that we do,

and enjoy every record that we're making at the time.

*Do you ever feel frustrated as a person or as a musician?*

I used to get that way.

*Why?*

Musical mistakes used to bother me. Since I was in charge of what happened, mistakes used to really bother me. I used to put music before people.

*What does that mean?*

Well, I would go into a place to perform music with the necessary personnel and I had a predisposition on how this should go because I know every spot. When we count it off and we begin playing, there would be one mistake someone would make in the arrangement or in a passage. It would really bother me when that happened because it didn't live up to the perfect rendition that I had already dreamed of and would bring out some unjustifiable anger. That used to get me frustrated.

*How would that anger express itself?*

I would holler, be rude.

*Did people consider you difficult to work with?*

Yes. Yes. They were right and I was wrong. Just terribly wrong.

*Your responsibilities have increased, how do you handle it now?*

By cutting off cancers. After taking stock and reviewing and examining and doing my homework on meditation and things that I wanted to get rid of and things that I wanted to add in my life, I think that

was a cancer. Those are the things you learn as you grow in what you do, if you pay attention to them and accept that you have faults, and not be so grandiose. Some of us get carried away with it. We're rude all of our lives.

*You are very much concerned about self-development?*

You owe it to other people to be concerned about self development, especially when you are in a career where other people put their career in your hands. They hear what you say and take it very seriously. If you've accepted that position, you had best be conscious of it or else you'll constantly be busted by others and yourself from things that will contaminate you and eat over into your heart.

*How long do you want to be doing this?*

Oh, forever. Forever, and I will. I've noticed that lately.

*Tell us how you mean that.*

It's audible. A doctor performs something that's not audible. But music is a function that's audible. It has something to do with the word. When something is spoken and put out there, it's accepted in the mind. Music is the same way. Once you hear something you like, it becomes a part of you forever. It's a part of your awareness through a medium that can't be isolated. I mean, no one can do anything about what you accept in your mind, and I'm in the business of selling something to people's minds. □

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TAIRAY YATES

## Women In Jazz At The C.A.C. November 28, 1981

One thing that the *Women in Jazz* concert provided the evening of November 28 was an enjoyable and alternative jazz event. It also brought to light some existing problems, one of which can be easily solved with a rallying of human resources, and the other not so simply resolved.

The concert opened with a solo piano performance by UNO music student Tata Andres. Andres performed an original composition that was a contrast to the more upbeat jazz that dominated the rest of the evening.

Andres was followed by the Women's All Star Jazz Band, featuring Angelle Trosclair, piano and vocals; Betsy Braud, reeds; Diana Lyle, trumpet; Patrice Fisher, Harp; and Linda Aubert, bass. Stephanie Sieberth also contributed vocals and delivered one of the highlights of the evening, "God Bless the Child." For the most part, the group's repertoire relied on Latin rhythms but displayed a noticeable lack of improvisation. Although the group had only practiced together for a couple of months prior to the concert, it remains an unfavorable reflection on these fine musicians to neglect the element of improvisation, so vital to the idiom. Also reflecting poorly on the group were problems with the sound system throughout the set.

The All Stars were followed by Germaine Bazzle and the Gentlemen of Jazz, who played mainstream jazz with their usual casual precision. These musicians all display a deep joy for playing music. With this set, the problems that had been plaguing the sound system were under control.

Concluding the evening was Blue Lu Baker, backed by Danny Barker and his band. The emphasis here shifted to blues, and the group put forth an inspired performance.

Of the points brought to light that evening, the first is that there is no reason for the Jazz Factory at the CAC to be such a poor

environment for concerts. The acoustics are bad. On the evening of the concert, there was a humming in the lighting system that shattered the mood during soft musical passages and rendered announcements inaudible. On top of that, the evening's concert was not the first from which people had to be turned away at the door by order of the fire marshall. While the size of the room is somewhat inflexible, factors like acoustics and electrical wiring can be remedied. It is becoming obvious that the CAC is determined to make the Jazz Factory an important outlet for creative American music, and there may have to be some involvement by those people in the community who will benefit from the facility. My guess is that the CAC would welcome donations from the business community of scrap materials that could be used for soundproofing and a few hours here and there of otherwise costly services.

The other unfortunate situation is that women are limited by our expectations to filling certain positions in jazz bands. We expect them to sing and play the piano as well as any man, but not to stand up on stage and blow a horn. Guitarist Emily Remler says that when she gets up on the bandstand, the guys look at her with fright, expecting her to ruin their jazz with folk music. Unfortunately, *Women in Jazz* did nothing to alleviate this prevailing attitude.

However, it is also important to note here that that was not the goal of the concert. According to the Project Director, Allison Kaslow, the purpose of *Women in Jazz* was to give participating musicians time to collaborate and be original in an otherwise unavailable setting. This the concert accomplished, with a limited amount of success.

With all of this in mind, let's remember that on the evening on November 28, lots of people turned out for *Women in Jazz*, those who could get in enjoyed good music as well as the benefits of a cash bar, and those who could not get in were at least afforded access to the bar.

— Brad Palmer

## Heat Generation The Radiators Croaker CR-1442

*Heat Generation*, the Radiators' newest offering, is their first album produced in the confines of the recording studio. Their fine debut album, *Work Done On Premises*, was cut live at Tipitina's and captures the band's hot on-stage personality. *Heat Generation* has some strong cuts, and overall the album is filled with that driving fishhead pace. After years together, the Radiators are tightly evolved and their play on *Heat Generation* shows a refined maturity. While simply structured, these songs are filled with sensitive interplay of instruments. In this album a refreshing depth is achieved without sacrificing the get-down factor.

Where this album suffers is in the translation of music that has evolved in the tropical smokehouses around town into music recorded in the studio. Some of the



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Richard Cook in *New Musical Express* Nov. 21, 1981 Issue.

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songs need editing, particularly the endings, which tend to degenerate into confusing instrumentation with a lack of definition. *Heat Generation* was internally produced. The addition of an outside producer's impartial touch might have strengthened the structure.

*Heat Generation* is filled with good material. Lyricist Ed Volker has some great moments and the band drives the songs home. "Cocktail Music" begins with a fine piano introduction, setting the stage for a slow burn. The interaction between guitars makes this one a sizzler. "Do you like cocktail music?" I sure do. "Can they play fishhead music?" They sure can. This simple song is catchy and memorable.

"Sunglasses" features some very funky piano by Ed Volker. The piano break is short and effective. There is the shadow of Professor Longhair nearby ("As sure as you're born, you got to go home with your sunglasses on.") This song has a hometown feel to the music. The lyrics are simple with a universal message couched in humorous images.

Other hot picks off *Heat Generation* are "Monkey In Her Heart," with its driving blues a la Junior Wells; "Rainbow," with a wonderful loping bass line by Reggie Scanlan, a romantic beauty that works well in contrast to the burners on the album; and the title cut, with its river images and swampy vocal mysteries. This album is a recommended addition to your record collection, and aside from the aforementioned rough spots in production, this is a strong effort. There are ample BTUs to heat up your stereo and keep you rocking around the house.

— Jon Foosse

## **The Raybeats Southern Tour November, 1981**

I've always wanted to do one of those hip *Rolling Stone* type stories for which the dedicated journalist "makes all the gigs" and talks with the band about "the road" prior to reviewing their latest vinyl offering within the context of "the gigs" on "the road." Well, thanks to four fine gents from the Big Apple known collectively as The Raybeats, I now have that golden opportunity before me. Pouring over their entire record catalogue (one EP and one LP) and attending every date of their extensive southern tour (Baton Rouge and New Orleans) has prepared me for the task. This is the Raybeats' story, and it begins in the Big B.R.

11-20-81, *Chief's, Baton Rouge*: "Who are these guys anyway... never heard of 'em. One good sign, set up on stage is an alto saxophone and an ancient Acetone combo organ. Supposed to play instrumentals only... well, so did the Ventures (and Henry Mancini, for that matter.) Wait, here they come... oh oh, matching western cut iridescent suits with white shirts and those whatchamacallit ties that cross in the front

with a snap closer... looks like it could be a good night."

If ever there was music capable of turning back the tide against such sought after imports as cheap Japanese cars and intelligent English bands, it is music as played by the Raybeats. This is bona fide American... an Eighties distilled throwback to the best of Sixties pumped up full throttle secret agent music by way of the Southern California surf with a little Les Paul and Duane Eddy thrown in for good measure. I Spy meets Dick Dale. Driving drums, pulsing bass, shadowy organ, and metallic guitars delivering no nonsense melodies through a wash of vibrato and echo. This is serious dance music.

Time to meet those Raybeats! Behind the drums, a man working overtime, pounding headlong toward his first coronary: Don Christensen. Playing mean guitar, grinning like a lunatic when pressed into playing any song by Link Wray: Jody Harris. (By the way, both Christensen and Harris put in time with the Contortions.) Straight to you from Minnesota, famous for on-stage lurching about and super-charged gum chewing, on guitar and bass: Danny Amis. And finally, alternating on sax, guitar and organ, capable at a moment's notice of frantic Hullabaloo/Shindig era dancing: Pat Irwin. Fine musicians and scholars all.

**Guitar Beat — P.V.C. Records:** This 1981 release offers eleven nifty tunes with nary a lyric to ponder. The best songs set oblique, sinister saxophone against single note guitar lines and soaring organ washes. The songs that are not the best do the same thing, only not quite so well. But why get picky, either you like this stuff or you don't... and I do. (But then again, I also think that "Matango, The Fungus of Terror" was among the best movies made in the early Sixties. So much for objectivity.) Watch out for "B-Gas-Rickshaw," "Tone Zone" and "Big Black Sneakers"; songs as good as their titles. The previously mentioned four-song E.P., *Roping Wild Bears*, features three tunes later re-recorded for *Guitar Beat*. The remaining two minutes and fifty-four seconds, tantalizingly entitled "Rise and Fall of Flingel Bunt," is alone worth the price of admission.

**11-21-81 at the Beat Exchange, New Orleans:** The Raybeats at The Beat Exchange... sounds too right to be wrong... even with a \$6 cover. Shoulda known better. Band comes on late, not nearly up to the previous night's show in Baton Rouge. Exchange regulars spend the first set trying to decide if it's cool to dance to this musical anachronism — not much dancing gets done. Glad I was born in the Fifties rather than the Sixties... dancing is cool anytime, so the Raybeats play, I do a modified frug, and the regulars look appropriately bored. Everyone goes home early.

Ran into those Raybeats one last time before they departed for the more receptive environs of N.Y.C. They said they didn't expect to get down south again for quite awhile. Until they do, listening to *Guitar Beat* once a day should do the job. On the back cover they even give the address of the official fan club. I could use a new T-shirt.

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Look, I don't expect everyone will be as unashamedly devoted to this band as I have become. Their music is simplistic, limited in scope, and not one bit original. They wear funny looking suits and don't seem to be at all comfortable living in this decade. But if you can remember the days when cubic inches were far more important than miles per gallon, what a surfer's cross looked like, and what the letters U.N.C.L.E. stood for, the Raybeats might be for you. I just have to like a band who dedicates songs to Perry Mason's secretary.  
— Steve Graves

**Talk To You By Hand  
Anson Funderburgh  
& The Rockets  
Black Top BT-1001**

In the best Mountain/Radiators/and Who Knows Who Else tradition, the fine print on the album cover of Texas blues-guitarist Anson Funderburgh's new album, *Talk to You by Hand*, advises excess volume for proper listening. In fact, it takes the further step of recommending that the listener cushion his brain with a cloud of some sort. Well, I wanted to meet these boys on their own ground, but I also needed to be able to hold my crayon to take some notes. This dilemma was solved by the entrance of a friend. Slyly I plied him, while nonchalantly starting Funderburgh and the Rockets to turning.

By the time my friend was properly conditioned, we were by Ike Turner's "Tore Up," and into Earl King's "Come On." My friend's extremities were twitching and he was singing along, sort of. After a few more cuts went by, I hazarded, "How do you like this record?"

"Grmph," he applauded. Okay, first test passed.

But what about poor sober me? I also recognized a quality blues album. Obviously, these people have been well schooled by their performing career in Dallas area gin mills.

Funderburgh can really play, as best exemplified in B.B. King's "Walking Dr. Bill," Elmore James' "Red Hot Mama," and "I Found a New Love" by Little Milton. Li'l Darrell Nulisch's harp playing is fine, and his vocals are strong (though to my taste they could be a bit grittier). The horn arrangements are good and the rhythm is tight (pianist Doug "The Hammer" Rynack makes the title track). Also, the group is loyal to the genre. With the exception of the R&B "This Could Go On Forever," there are no strays from the true and blue.

So, yeah, this is a good album. But maybe Producer Hammond Scott and Funderburgh stuck a little *too* closely to the tradition. By that I mean that this record could have been made in the Fifties, in that it is a collection of three and three-and-a-half minute cuts, as if it were an album grouping of sides from 45's. Even Bunny Matthews' cover design is an overdose of Fifties kitsch. Rarely does anyone

get to stretch out here, and sometimes things end just when they could be getting interesting. Well, it's their first time on vinyl, so maybe it was considered wise not to take too many chances.

Partly, I feel like *Talk to You by Hand* is a musically well presented menu, with dinner not to be served until The Rockets themselves make it onto some New Orleans stage. And partly, I feel like hearing side two again.


— Jerry Karp

## New Orleans Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra At Theatre for the Performing Arts November 17 - 18, 1981

The Theatre for the Performing Arts is tough on reviewers: it is so dark in the hall during the performance that taking notes is quite difficult and following a score impossible. And not just reviewers; there are many who enjoy following the score along with the music, or perhaps reading the translation of the text of the Beethoven *Ninth* or Mahler *Second* during the performance.

The concert, Andrew Massey conducting, opened with a performance of *The Les Offrandes oubliees* (*The Forgotten Offering*), Olivier Messiaen's second major work, which was dated from 1930 and scored for large orchestra. It is in three parts, depicting Christ's offering of Himself for man on the cross, man's forgetting of that offering and consequent descent into sinfulness, and God's offering a second chance to man through the Eucharist. This work thus continues the theme of Messiaen's first composition, *The Celestial Banquet*, of 1928. Indeed, all of Messiaen's work is religious, reflecting his devout Catholicism. The work is seldom played, and there is no domestic recording available; it is recorded on an English RCA/Erato disc, STU70673. I suspect that most of the audience, like myself, were hearing the work for the first time; and although the program booklet is silent on the matter, it would not surprise me to find that this was the first performance in New Orleans.

The first part is quite melancholic, with sighing strings supported by a pedal in the deep winds and brass. The music moves slowly and is joined without pause to the second part, which is agitated and turbulent, reminding me of a storm at sea. One thinks of the apostles' fear of the storm, forgetting Who was with them, while Jesus slept in the boat. There is an angular portion, with powerful punctuation by the bass drum. The third part, at a very slow tempo, begins with low strings sustaining over a bassoon pedal. But maintenance of the minor mode keeps the music from being as peaceful as the *Langsam* of the Mahler *Third*, which it otherwise resembles strikingly. Later, the



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strings mount higher and the harmony softens, but the bittersweet mood remains. The end is very quiet, and the Orchestra sustained tone excellently through the vanishing *pianissimo*. Indeed, the playing throughout the committed performance was beautiful and intense. A welcome work, and the high point of the evening for me.

The orchestra starred throughout Suite from *The Miraculous Mandarin*, Op. 19, by Bartok, a very difficult work to play well. The "special effects" in the winds and brass during the mugging scenes were brought off superbly. The strings kept up the requisite whirlwind of relentless energy during the introduction to the chaotic minds of the thugs, even managing to drown the too-reticent brass and winds. I felt that the interpretation of these violent sections wanted even more bite, and I especially missed a viciousness in the opening pages.

Andre Laplante brought to Rachmaninoff's *Piano Concerto No. 3 in D minor*, Op. 30, a well-conceived and consistent interpretation that emphasized the lyric poetry of the first movement and the introspection of the second. Indeed, he stressed the rumination that characterizes the concerto, and thereby managed to make it a stronger piece than it is when played to the hilt. Massey and the orchestra supported this view well with a true accompaniment and restrained sound that obscured the soloist only for a brief moment. M. Laplante's rounded and mellow tone matched perfectly. The devilish third movement he carried off in bravura style, to well-deserved acclaim. While the melodic lines of the finale were clear and beautifully colored, the orchestral texture of the first two movements was murky. (That might have been caused by my location, near the back of the parquet, far under the overhang, because the sound of even the Bartok lacked the requisite cutting edge.) Massey and the orchestra followed the soloist through the hairpin turns of the finale with assured abandon, while putting forth a wonderfully rich tone in the grand moments. The conclusion, with its long-awaited "big tune," was shaped with deep feeling that I found quite affecting, and Massey seasoned the chords near the end just right by separating them slightly: an exhilarating touch. — Stuart Wood

## The Show

## Time Zone

## At The C.A.C.

Nov. 21 & Dec. 5, 1981

If you've been looking for something new and different from a rock band, you'll probably find it at *The Show*. Time Zone — Daemon Shea on drums, Bob Fonseca on bass, Chuck Phillips on keyboards, and Steve Cunningham on guitar, with Steve Sweet as visual co-ordinator — grew out of a desire to do something other than the usual



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Sat., Jan. 30 — Li'l Queenie  
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music club performance, and to this end they have incorporated films and a slide presentation into the act. The result is a fascinating two-hour show of all original music accompanying a very loose plot which is elaborated on by the slides.

The show opens with a film by Jesse Poinbeouf of the wedding of the two main characters, Dick and Jane, played by David Ross McCarty and Janis Carlson, and then the slides follow them through the various phases of their marriage. First there's the honeymoon, then the problems begin — Dick fooling around at the office, Jane stuck at home with the housework — and the marriage finally deteriorates completely after a game of Monopoly. (It could happen to anyone.) As I said before, the story line is very loose; the show is based on a group of already written songs, rather than songs written around a pre-existing concept. As a result, it never becomes tedious. There are non-narrative sequences, such as the one about barriers consisting of abstract photos of walls, doors, and fences, and a sequence of shots of the area around Carrollton and Tulane taken at sundown, that break the action and provide some relief. Comic relief is provided in a number of scenes, especially the one in which Dick tries unsuccessfully to pick up a fox, played by Barbara Menendez, in Sugar's Disco.

One of the highlights of the show, occurring at about midpoint and acting as a sort of centerpiece, is the film "You Choose" by Karen Kern and Ruud Bierhuizen. The film is about making choices for yourself when you're surrounded by the innumerable seemingly meaningless choices of a consumption-mad society. This is an essential theme of the show. After Dick leaves, Jane is sent into outer space for her "final test" (I'm not making this up). While on a distant planet Jane discovers that she is going to have to help herself because no one else will, after which she is reborn as a new woman from a cocoon. If this sounds weird and hilarious, it is. And by the end, the music, which has gone from danceable rock to a quieter electronic interlude and is stunning throughout, reaches an amazing intensity. Most impressive.

As a souvenir or a preview of the show, you can get Time Zone's new single, which offers two of the more memorable songs from the show, "I Wanna Dance" and "Try." The tracks were recorded at Ultrasonic, and both sides show off the band's command of intricate, offbeat rhythms. Especially "I Wanna Dance," which should be a hit on dance floors everywhere. There will be a final performance of *The Show* at the CAC on Saturday, January 2, after which Time Zone hopes to perform it, along with the visual presentation and on the same set, in clubs around town and hopefully out of town. And even if you've already seen the show, the band promises that it will continue to evolve as new songs are written and the concept changes. I saw the first two shows, and the second was much better than the first. This trend is likely to continue, so don't miss it. □

— Steve Alleman



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Persia on top.

Persia came away the winner of the WRNO Battle of the Bands held at the Palace Saloon last month. The rock-off was held to determine the best of the bands featured on WRNO's Rock Album... That same eventful night, drummer Carmine Appice, of Vanilla Fudge and more recently Rod Stewart's band came to town to help out his buddy Danny Johnson and his new band at Suave's. The crowd was slim, due probably to the Badfinger concert and the doings at the Palace the same night, but the music was very hot.

Oz has been together one year now and they're ready to release a totally new show after their appearance at Suave's on December 26. Be prepared for a noticeable difference as Steve, Rick, Rusty, and Mike kick off the new year with new songs of which our favorite pick hit is "Betrayed"... Zebra plans on having an album out in February, complete with national tour. The band has been packing them in like no other band in town for over a year now.

Roulette goes to IRS (Independent Recording Studio, the one in Jackson, not California) to wrap up its debut album in early January. The album should be out sometime in February... Check out Larry Mott down in the Quarter at Until Waiting Fills. Larry plays a mean ragtime piano.

Luther Kent with his talent-loaded band Trick Bag is back singing the blues at his original digs, the Old Absinthe Bar... Brian Lee, the Blind Giant of the Blues, and his entire band are moving to the Crescent City. Look for them at the Blues Saloon along with other national acts, including, so the N.O.R.M. (New Orleans Rumor Mill) goes, Mr. Roy Orbison.

Next time you're in Memphis, you might want to check out River City Blues and Jazz Tavern on Elvis Presley Blvd. They have live blues and jazz bands several nights a week, and on Monday nights, vocalist Rufus

Thomas can be found spinning blues records and laying down a mellow rap. Rufus can also be heard Saturday nights from midnight to 2 a.m. doing his "Blues in the Night" show on WLOK.

Woodenhead has taken on its first vocalist, the pretty Miss Angelle Trosclair... James Rivers is touring Mexico for a few weeks... Richard Cook, critic for England's New Musical Express (NME), on the Uptights' single, "I'm Awake": "Easily the best of the mostly dire U.S. independents. Carolyn Odell's sleek pout is enough to carry this modest swinger — pure 5D guitar break, too..." Miriam Makeba will be featured at a benefit for the All African Film Society on February 14 at the Theatre for the Performing Arts.

RZA, which disbanded when bass player Ray Ganucheau and Matt Scoggin quit the band, has acquired Becky Kury on bass and vocals. At press time they're still looking for a keyboard player... Rick Sebastien is the new drummer for Metropolis...

Joe "King" Carrasco has signed with MCA; album to come... The Copas Brothers are playing at Big Jim's weekends, Hired Hand on Mondays and Tuesdays, and Tupelo's on Wednesdays. What do you do with your spare time, boys?... Ronnie Barron is working with Tom Waits on a soundtrack for Francis Ford Coppola's new movie, One From the Heart.

A sneak preview of Stevenson Palfi's Piano Players, a video documentary of Tuts Washington, Professor Longhair and Allen Toussaint, revealed a sensitive presentation of the way three exceptional musicians learned from and taught each other. Especially powerful was the footage on Professor Longhair's funeral. The documentary, which has been bought by the prestigious CBS cable network, will be shown to the general public at a special show in February. Watch for it.

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ROCK DRUMMER FORMALLY WITH MELANGE, LOOKING FOR BAND. CALL PAUL 834-9440 OR 464-0654.

EXP. DRUMMER LOOKING FOR WORKING BAND, INTO R&B, FUNK, BLUES AND ROCK. CALL MILTON 897-6946.

DRUMMER SEEKS R&R GROUP. PREFERENCES HARD ROCK CALL DWIGHT AT 341-3191.

DRUMMER SEEKING OTHER MUSICIANS TO FORM ROCK GROUP. AVAILABLE TO JOIN EXISTING BAND. CALL 288-4334 AFTER 2:00 PM.

EXPERIENCED HEAVY METAL DRUMMER WITH EQUIPMENT SEEKS SERIOUS BAND—CONTACT BOBBY AT 288-8956.

EXPERIENCED DRUMMER LOOKING FOR WORKING GROUP. PREFER ROCK, JAZZ, COUNTRY. CALL STEVE 834-0446.

### BASS PLAYERS

PROGRESSIVE ROCK BASS PLAYER LOOKING FOR BAND THAT WANTS TO GO PLACES—CONTACT DWAYNE AT 456-1527.

BASS PLAYER SEEKS WORKING BAND—FULL OR PART TIME—ALL STYLES CALL JOHN—368-1105.

BASSIST W/CREDITS—NEW IN TOWN SEEKS WORKING SITUATION—ALSO DOUBLES ON GUITAR—PREFERS FUNK, JAZZ, FUSSION, SOUL—CALL DON AT 821-3005.

BASS PLAYER INTO ORIG. SEEKS BAND—CALL NORMAN AT 348-2137.

PROGRESS ROCK BASS PLAYER SEEKS EITHER BAND, OR MUSICIANS TO FORM BAND. CALL CHARLES 1-536-3386.

JAZZ BASS PLAYER LOOKING FOR SPOT GIGS CALL 283-6523 ASK FOR REBECCA REGARDING JIM.

BASS PLAYER LOOKING FOR WEEKEND WORK—I PLAY OLD STANDARDS AND JAZZ—CALL BRUCE AFTER 6 AT 368-3863.

ROCK BASS PLAYER INTO ZEP, RUSH, HEART WANTS GROUP CALL JAMES AT 341-6487.

EXP. BASSIST INTO ROCK OR BLUES LOOKING FOR GROUP—CALL ANDY AT 340-8959.

BASS PLAYER INTO OLDIES, 50'S, 60'S, POP. WANTS WEEKEND OR FULLTIME WORK. CALL CHARLES 833-7518.

BASS PLAYER—COMPOSER SEEKS MUSICIANS TO FORM RECORDING GROUP CONTACT SYDNEY AT 246-9709 OR 895-3047.

### SOUND TECHS.

PROFESSIONAL SOUND MAN WITH RECORDING & LIVE EXPERIENCES—CAN ALSO DO REPAIRS—CALL MIKE AT 488-5739.

### KEYBOARD PLAYERS

PIANO PLAYER—ALL STYLES, SEEKS WORK—SOME SAX & FIDDLE—HAVE EQUIPMENT CALL CHUCK 522-8516.

MULTI INSTRUMENTALIST (PIANO, VIBES, MARIMBA, DRUMS, TRUMPET, SYMPHONY PERCUSSION) LOOKING FOR WORKING DIXIELAND OR SWING BAND CALL 714-551-2138 OR 714-888-6412.

KEYBOARD/VOCALIST INTO ROCK, JAZZ, FUNK, REGGAE, LOOKING FOR GIGS—CALL JIMI 899-4136.

### BRASS

EXPERIENCED TRUMPET PLAYER—DOES SOME BACK GROUND VOCALS LOOKING FOR A GIG. CALL CARL 486-1309.

FOR INFORMATION ON OUR FREE REFERRAL SERVICE  
CALL 504-340-4983, METRO MUSIC,  
1995 BARATARIA BLVD. AT LAPALCO  
MARRERO, LA. 70072



# Tupelo's TAVERN

JANUARY 1982

Sunday

Monday

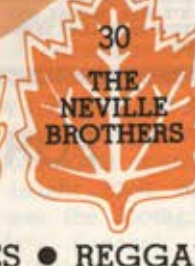
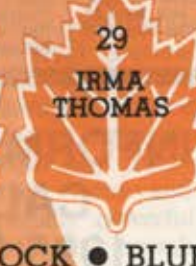
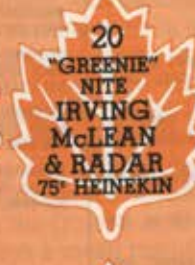
Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday



COUNTRY • COMEDY • THEATRE

ROCK • BLUES • REGGAE

(formerly Jed's — under new ownership!!)